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Facebook message

Corps' video: Log off, focus on loved ones

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

Take a break from social media for the holidays and focus on time spent with loved ones in the real world.

That's the message the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms, Calif., wants Marines to take from its latest video posted Thursday on — what else? — Facebook.

The video is one of the latest attempts to reach Marines through social media as the Corps' leaders embrace the humor that's often the coin of the digital realm.

The light-hearted efforts come as the service confronted a social media scandal this year when an investigation found thousands of active-duty Marines and veterans had belonged to a Facebook group in which members had posted degrading messages about their fellow servicemembers online.

In the video, base commanding general Maj. Gen. William F. Mullen III and

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY BEV SCHILLING/Stars and Stripes

Marine Corps general: 'There's a war coming'

By AMY B. WANG
The Washington Post

The Marine Corps commandant told about 300 Marines in Norway last week that they should be prepared for battle, predicting a "bigass fight" to come.

"I hope I'm wrong, but there's a war coming," Gen. Robert Neller told the Marines on Thursday, according to Military.com. "You're in a fight here, an informational fight, a political fight, by your presence."

Neller was visiting a Marine rotational force near Trondheim, about 300 miles north of Oslo. The Marines have been stationed there since January. Their presence in Norway is intended to support operations by NATO and the U.S. European Command, as well as to help the Marine Corps facilitate training in cold weather and mountainous conditions.

But Neller and other Corps leaders told the force they should be prepared for a change in their peacetime mission, should

the need arise. In particular, Neller predicted the Pacific and Russia to be the focus of any conflict in the future outside of the Middle East, Military.com reported.

"Just remember why you're here," Sgt. Maj. Ronald Green told the troops, according to the military news site. "They're watching. Just like you watch them, they watch you. We've got 300 Marines up here; we could go from 300 to 3,000 overnight. We could raise the bar."

As the Marines' top general, Neller is

a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Pentagon's senior-most leadership team responsible for contingency planning. It is unclear to what extent his comments were indicative of an actual war to come or merely meant as a pep talk for troops stationed far from home during the Christmas holiday.

Lt. Col. Eric Dent, a spokesman for the general, told The Washington Post on Saturday night that Neller's remarks "were

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MILITARY

War: General wants troops prepared for possible conflict

FROM FRONT PAGE

intended to inspire and focus the Marines' training." He added the general had also told the troops none of the four countries he had referenced — Russia, China, Iran and North Korea — wanted to go to war.

"The thought of war has a way of motivating warriors to train hard and increase readiness. I cannot imagine any professional military leader suggesting to his or her Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen that we shouldn't think that conflict is pending," Dent said in an email. "Being ready is a constant practice and refocusing. Neller and others have said, 'If you want peace, train for war.' That's exactly what we want and are doing."

With unusual fanfare, President Donald Trump unveiled a new National Security Strategy last week that cast China and Russia as competitors for global power and as potential threats to the United States.

"China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity," the document states. "They are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence."

As The Washington Post's Anne Gearan and Steven Mufson reported, however, the new national security strategy dances around Russia's attempts to meddle in the 2016 presidential election, much in the way Trump has since he was elected:

Trump has publicly complimented Russian President Vladimir Putin, calling him "very smart," and has sought to establish a



SAMANTHA K. BRAUN/Courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller, left, speaking with a Norwegian soldier during a September visit to Norway, predicted a "bigass fight" was coming while speaking last week to 300 U.S. Marines stationed in Norway.

'Being ready is a constant practice and refocusing. Neller and others have said, 'If you want peace, train for war.' That's exactly what we want and are doing.'

Lt. Col. Eric Dent
spokesman for Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller

better relationship with Russia after years of worsening ties with the country under former President Barack Obama. He has been openly skeptical of U.S. intelligence findings that Russia mounted a systematic effort to undermine the 2016 presidential election. But Trump has not reversed congressional sanctions on Russia over its actions in Ukraine, as

Putin hoped he would.

The strategy document released Dec. 18 skirts the issue of Russia's involvement in the presidential election.

"Through modernized forms of subversive tactics, Russia interferes in the domestic political affairs of countries around the world," the document says.

Trump sends Christmas greetings to troops abroad

Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. — President Donald Trump sent Christmas greetings to U.S. troops stationed around the world.

From Mar-a-Lago, the Palm Beach, Fla., estate where Trump is spending

Trump spoke to troops stationed in Qatar, Kuwait and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

the holidays, he spoke by video hook-up on Christmas Eve to members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, stationed in Qatar, Kuwait, and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Trump told the troops that Americans are thankful for them and their families. He says they're "the greatest people on Earth."

He offered praise to the Coast Guard for saving thousands of lives during a series of deadly hurricanes in the United States.

Trump told the troops that "every American heart" is thankful for them and is asking God to watch over them and their families.

No paper on Tuesday

Stars and Stripes will not publish on Tuesday.

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MILITARY

US issues alert over N. Korean propaganda

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

U.S. Forces Korea is warning service members on the Korean Peninsula to stay alert to potential insider threats after North Korean propaganda appeared on American bases.

The 8th Army reported that propaganda leaflets were discovered at Seoul's Yong-san Garrison on Thursday, shortly after a

North Korean soldier defected across the heavily fortified border just north of the South Korean capital.

In an alert posted later that day on USFK's Facebook page, officials said a significant number of North Korean propaganda leaflets and CDs had been placed at strategic locations on multiple U.S. military installations in South Korea.

"Given the number of foreign nationals

with access to our military installations via employment, sponsorship and partnership programs, the potential for insider threats is always a reality," the alert said. "It is essential for our personnel to report all [propaganda] and suspicious individuals to the appropriate authorities to help mitigate potential threats."

Propaganda is used to influence people's attitudes, beliefs and behaviors and those disrupting it seek to disrupt operations

and to degrade readiness, the alert added. It also warned personnel not to post propaganda on social media and to beware of unfamiliar CDs that could contain malware or viruses.

USFK advised personnel to report propaganda, people distributing it or suspicious individuals to security forces.

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STEPHEN CAMPBELL/Courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps

Japan Air Self-Defense Force personnel study an F-35B Lightning II in September at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

Japan's Cabinet OKs \$46B defense budget in wake of N. Korean threats

By HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Cabinet on Friday approved a record \$45.8 billion defense budget for next fiscal year to help cope with growing ballistic missile threats from North Korea.

The budget — expected to pass both houses of the Diet — is a 1.3 percent increase over fiscal year 2017 and the seventh consecutive increase since Abe took office in 2012, Defense Ministry officials said.

"Japan will build up its defense capabilities while focusing on the further enhancement of joint functions in order to seamlessly and dynamically fulfill its defense responsibilities," the budget proposal says.

It goes on to explain how the government wants to respond to intrusions on remote islands, ballistic missile attacks and threats from outer space and cyberspace.

North Korea has escalated its

missile program during the past year, test-firing more than 20 missiles over and around Japan. Last month, it launched a powerful intercontinental ballistic missile toward the northern island of Hokkaido that experts believe is capable of reaching the U.S. mainland.

The budget allocates \$1.2 billion for costs related to missile defense, including \$6.2 million for the land-based Aegis Ashore system and \$41.5 million for upgrades to the Japan Aerospace Defense Ground Environment, or JADGE.

Japan recently announced plans to purchase Aegis Ashore to strengthen its ability to intercept incoming missiles alongside its Aegis-equipped ships and land-based Patriot batteries. JADGE will be used to respond to missiles with lofted trajectories or to any attack that is difficult to foresee.

The budget also includes \$19.4 million for standoff missiles requested after the original pro-

posal was made in August. This includes the implementation of Joint Strike Missiles to be installed on advanced F-35A Lightning II stealth fighters. Japan is scheduled to field a new F-35A squadron in Misawa by March 2018.

"It will become possible to execute various operations more effectively and safely by dealing with sea-surface and landing units invading into Japan from outside the enemy's search and attack ranges without approaching the enemy," Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera told reporters earlier this month.

To respond to China's expanding naval activities, \$813.4 million has been allocated to build two escort ships along with \$614.9 million for a submarine with improved monitoring capabilities. Japan also budgeted \$1.74 billion for hosting U.S. forces in Japan and \$2 billion to pay for U.S. troop realignment.

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Air Force picks Ala., Wis. Air National Guard fields to host F-35As

Stars and Stripes

The futures of Air National Guard bases in Alabama and Wisconsin were bolstered Thursday by news that they'll be receiving some of America's most advanced multirole stealth fighters.

Dannelly Field in Montgomery, Ala., and Truxal Field in Madison, Wis., have been chosen as "preferred locations" to host F-35A Lightning II squadrons, an Air Force statement said.

"Selecting Truxal Field and Dannelly Field will increase Air National Guard F-35A units providing 5th Generation airpower around the world," Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson said in the statement.

If the sites pass environmental analyses, the F-35As — which lack the short-takeoff, vertical-landing capabilities of the F-35B used by the Marine Corps — are expected to begin arriving at Truxal in early 2023 and at Dannelly later that year.

"As F-35As arrive at these locations, we will use the existing aircraft at these fields to replace the aging F-16s at other Air National Guard units," Wilson added.

The Air Force will continue to fly a mix of fifth- and fourth-generation fighters into the 2040s, the statement said. The purpose is to maintain enough jets to meet combatant commander requirements, to provide required training and to allow a reasonable deployment tempo for the force.

The service also considered Gowen Field in Idaho, Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Michigan and Jacksonville Air Guard Station in Florida.

As with most new platforms, the fighter's development was plagued with issues, and at one point President Donald Trump indicated he might scrap the program altogether.

In November, Congress approved a \$700 billion defense bill that provides money for 90 F-35s.

news@stripes.com

Trio charged over stolen Guard weapons, gear in SC

By ANDREW DYS

The (Rock Hill, S.C.) Herald

LANCASTER, S.C. — Federal officials have charged three suspects from Lancaster with possession of a grenade launcher, machine guns, other weapons and military gear that was stolen from the Army National Guard armory.

Officials recently seized many of the weapons and other military gear, including night-vision goggles. At least three machine guns still are missing, federal officials said.

It's not known who stole the weapons and other equipment. Federal documents indicate the suspects tried to sell the items.

Brandon Shane Polston, 32; Austin Lee Ritter, 23; and Kimberly Denise Cannon, 39, all of Lancaster, were indicted Wednesday in federal court. They each are charged with having the machine guns and the grenade launcher, according to federal

prosecutors and court documents. The three also face weapons and receiving-stolen-goods charges in Lancaster County based on the gun seizure, records show.

Lancaster police told Lancaster National Guard officials that a police officer saw two machine guns during a Nov. 26 traffic stop, according to a federal department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms affidavit.

After the weapons had been seized during the stop, Lancaster police went the same day to the armory. Policemen found the doors and the gun vault unsecured, federal officials said in the affidavit. A team from the State Law Enforcement Division responded, and found that National Guard officials at the armory were "unaware of the theft of items and the unsecured building ...," the federal affidavit said.

Lt. Col. Cindi King, a spokesperson for the S.C. National Guard, said the federal investigation is ongoing.

MILITARY



Courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps

Maj. Gen. William F. Mullen III, center, commander of Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., performs in a Marine Corps video.

Message: Official says general understands power of social media

FROM FRONT PAGE

senior enlisted leader Sgt. Maj. Michael J. Hendges sit down for chow with a group of junior Marines, who scroll through social media feeds on their phones as they eat and chat.

The leaders reprise their respective roles, as the thoughtful and articulate general and his gruff, laconic heavy. These are parts the two played to comic effect in a widely shared video this past fall.

As an instrumental version of "The Carol of the Bells" builds to a crescendo, the millennial Marines become increasingly wrapped up in their digital worlds, frustrating the imposing and clearly old-school Hendges.

Like a modern take on Linus from the "Charlie Brown Christmas" special, one Marine stretches, cracks her knuckles and bends her head down over a laptop keyboard, her fingers rapidly tapping.

Hendges can take no more and orders the Marines to stop, before Mullen offers sage advice.

"Hey Marines ... take time over the holidays to disconnect from your phones, talk to the people around you, especially your friends and family," he says. "The most important people are the people you're with, not the people on social media."

There's a real-life irony in that Mullen knows embracing social media helps amplify his command message.

"He understands the power of social media, yet wanted to get a message across to our Marines," Capt. Karen Holliday, director of the base's communications strategy and operations, said via email.

The command experienced that power in September with a video that offered a humorous take on the standard safety briefing given by many commanders before the long Labor Day weekend. At the time, Holliday said it "was (a) tough sell to senior leadership, but they loved the final product."

Produced by a lance corporal and directed by a Marine veteran, the two-minute video reached 2.5 million viewers, Holliday said Friday. Commanders throughout the service are turning to digital platforms to engage their Ma-

See Marine Corps leaders'

video on social media at: [stripes.com/go/USMCChristmas](https://www.stripes.com/go/USMCChristmas)

lines, she said.

"We are extremely lucky in the [Marine Corps] in that many of our leaders have realized the benefit of this type of communication," Holliday said.

And yet the Marine Corps has also been burned by the harmful power of social media this year.

In March, Marine veteran and investigative reporter Thomas Brennan exposed the existence of a 30,000-member Facebook group called Marines United, where active-duty and veteran Marines shared nude photos of female servicemembers and others, made derogatory comments about them and threatened some of the women.

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller took to YouTube in March to respond to the scandal, telling Marines to focus on training to fight adversaries and not "hiding on social media" and "participating in or allowing online activities that disrespect or harm their fellow servicemembers."

In the holiday video, Mullen reminds Marines to take care of one another, a central theme of the Marine Corps' ethos and its motto of "Semper Paratus," always faithful.

"The sergeant major and I look forward to seeing you back in the new year, ready to train," the general says. The combat center is home to one of the country's largest combined-arms training areas.

The spot posted Thursday, a little over a minute long, was produced under the leadership of Sgt. Eric Laclair, with Cpls. Dave Flores, Francisco Britoramirez, Devin Andrews and Medina Ayala-Lo, Lance Cpls. Ashlee Conover, Isaac Cantrell and Jeremiah Naranjo, and Pfc. Raychel Porter.

For his part, Mullen has pushed the Marines to "outdo each other" in their efforts to produce positive, shareable content for the base, Holliday said.

"They are absolutely up to the challenge."

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Russian submarine activity is prompting alarm in NATO

By MICHAEL BIRNBAUM

The Washington Post

BRUSSELS — Russian submarines have stepped up activity dramatically around undersea data cables in the North Atlantic, part of a more aggressive naval posture that has driven NATO to revive a Cold War-era command, according to senior military officials.

The apparent Russian focus on the cables, which provide Internet and other communications connections to North America and Europe, could give the Kremlin the power to sever or tap into vital data lines, the officials said. Russian submarine activity has increased to levels unseen since the Cold War, they said, sparking hints in recent months for the elusive watercraft.

"We are now seeing Russian underwater activity in the vicinity of undersea cables that I don't believe we have ever seen," said U.S. Navy Adm. Andrew Lennon, the commander of NATO's submarine forces. "Russia is clearly taking an interest in NATO and NATO nations' undersea infrastructure."

NATO has responded with plans to re-establish a command post, shuttered after the Cold War, to help secure the North Atlantic. NATO allies also are rushing to boost anti-submarine warfare capabilities and to develop advanced submarine-detecting planes.

Britain's top military commander also warned that Russia could imperil the cables that form the backbone of the modern global economy. The privately owned lines, laid along some of the same corridors as the first transatlantic telegraph wire in 1858, carry nearly all of the communications on the internet, facilitating trillions of dollars of daily trade. If severed, they could snarl the Web. If tapped, they could give Russia a valuable picture of the tide of the world's internet traffic.

"It's a pattern of activity, and it's a vulnerability," said British Air Chief Marshal Stuart Peach in an interview.

"Can you imagine a scenario where those cables are cut or disrupted, which would immediately and potentially catastrophically affect both our economy and other ways of living if they were disrupted?" Peach said in a speech in London this month.

The Russian Defense Ministry did not respond to a request for comment about the cables.

The Russian sea activity comes as the Kremlin also has pressed against NATO in the air and on land. Russian jets routinely clip NATO airspace in the Baltics, and troops drilled near NATO territory in September.

Russia has moved to modernize its once-decrepit Soviet-era fleet of submarines, bringing online or overhauling 13 craft since 2014. That pace, coming after Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula set off a new era of confrontation with the West, has spurred NATO efforts to counter them. Russia has about 60 full-size submarines, while the U.S. has 66.

Among Russia's capabilities, Lennon said, are deep-sea research vessels, including an old converted ballistic submarine that carries smaller submarines.

"They can do oceanographic research, underwater intelligence gathering," he said. "And what we have observed is an increased activity of that in the vicinity of undersea cables. We know that these auxiliary submarines are designed to work on the ocean floor, and they're transported by the mother ship, and we believe they may be equipped to manipulate objects on the ocean floor."

That capability could give Russia the ability to sever the cables or to tap into them. The insulated fiber-optic cables are fragile, and ships have damaged them accidentally by dragging their anchors along the seabed. That damage happens near the shore, where it is relatively easy to fix, not in the deeper Atlantic, where the cost of mischief could be far greater.

Lennon declined to say whether NATO believes Russia actually has touched the cables. Russian mil-

itary leaders have acknowledged that the Kremlin is active undersea at levels not seen since the end of the Cold War, when Russia was forced to curtail its submarine program in the face of economic turmoil and disorganization.

"Last year, we reached the same level as before the post-Soviet period, in terms of running hours," said Adm. Vladimir Korolev, the commander of the Russian Navy, earlier this year. "This is more than 3,000 days at sea for the Russian submarine fleet. This is an excellent sign."

The activity has forced a revival of Western sub-hunting skills that lay largely dormant since the end of the Cold War. Lennon said NATO allies have long practiced submarine-hunting. But until the past few years, there were few practical needs for close tracking, military officials said.

In recent months, the U.S. Navy has flown sorties in the areas where Russia is known to operate its submarines, according to aircraft trackers that use publicly available transponder data. On Thursday, for example, one of the planes shot off from Sigonella Naval Air Station in Sicily, headed eastward into the Mediterranean. It flew the same mission a day earlier.

The trackers have captured at least 10 missions carried out by U.S. submarine-tracking planes this month, excluding trips when the planes simply appeared to be in transit from one base to another. November was even busier, with at least 17 missions captured by the trackers.

NATO does not comment on specific submarine-tracking flights and declined to release data, citing the classified nature of the

missions. But NATO officials say that their submarine-tracking activities have increased significantly in the region.

Submarines are particularly potent war-fighting craft because they can generally only be heard, not seen, underwater. They can serve as a retaliatory strike force in case of nuclear war, can threaten military resupply efforts and can expand the range of conventional firepower available for use in lower-level conflicts.

The vessels are a good fit for the Kremlin's strategy of making do with less than its rivals, analysts say. Russia's foes need vast resources to track a single undersea craft, making the submarines' cost-to-mischief ratio attractive. Even as Russia remains a vastly weaker military force than NATO, the Kremlin has been able to pack an outsized punch in its confrontation with the West through the seizure of Crimea, support for the Syrian regime and, according to U.S. intelligence, its attempts to influence the U.S. election.

"You go off and you try to add expense for anything that we're doing, or you put things at risk that are of value to us, and submarines give them the capability to do it," a senior NATO official said of the Russian approach, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence assessments.

Russian military planners can say, "I can build fewer of them, I can have better quality, and I can put at risk and challenge and make it difficult for NATO," the official said.

Still, some analysts say the threat to cables may be overblown.

"Arguably, the Russians wouldn't be doing their jobs if they couldn't threaten underwater cables. Certainly, NATO allies won't be doing theirs if they were unable to counter that," said Adam Thomson, a former British ambassador to NATO.

Analysts say Russia's foes need vast resources to track a single undersea craft, making the subs' cost-to-mischief ratio attractive.

WAR ON TERRORISM

Syria's tangled map signals conflict ahead

BY ZEINA KARAM
Associated Press

BEIRUT — At a news conference announcing the end of yet another fruitless round of peace talks in Geneva this month, the U.N. envoy for Syria held up a color-coded map showing the divisions of territorial control in the war-torn country.

The multi-colored image displayed by a frustrated Staffan de Mistura is what Syria looks like today: a collage of mostly ravaged enclaves controlled by an assorted mix of local and foreign powers, each with a stake in the country's ongoing civil war.

Nearly seven years into the conflict, the war seems on one level to be winding down, largely because of Russia-backed government victories and local ceasefires aimed at freezing the lines of conflict.

Underlining this perception is the fact that President Bashar Assad — however battered and bruised — has survived the conflict, sitting more comfortably now than at any time since the rebellion against his rule erupted in March 2011. The fight against Islamic State, which at one point controlled a third of the country, is almost over, with both Russia and the United States declaring victory in their mission to defeat the extremist group.

Yet the country is still a tangled mess, with violent conflict likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Despite stepped-up diplomatic efforts, the parties are no closer to reaching a peace settlement than they were in 2012, when the first round of peace talks was held in Switzerland.

Assad will not voluntarily step aside and will likely stay on at least until 2021, when his current second presidential term ends. The opposition — down but not out — has not completely abandoned its goal of toppling him militarily. Fierce fighting continues in some areas, and a humanitarian catastrophe unfolds in a government-besieged area a short drive away from the capital of Damascus.

It may have shifted to a more stable and less violent phase, but the Syrian conflict is likely to bleed through 2018 and potentially longer, as prospects for new conflicts loom large.

Military limitations

Thanks to Russia's military intervention, Syrian government forces have retaken large swaths of rebel and ISIS-held areas, including main cities such as Homs, Aleppo and, most recently, Deir el-Zour. This month, they entered the rebel-held province of Idlib in northern Syria for the first time in years.

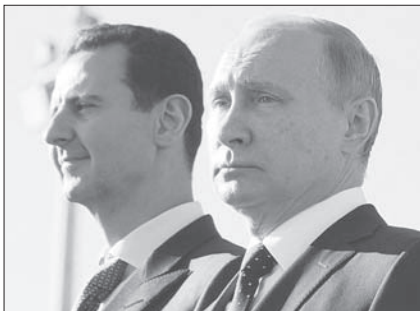
Toppling Assad militarily — a prospect that appeared within reach less than two years ago — now seems to have been ruled out, and even his most vocal opponents have moved away from their goal of ousting him.

But there are limitations to the



Residents walk through rubble with damaged electricity lines at the mountain resort town of Zabadani in the Damascus countryside, Syria, on May 18. Nearly seven years into the conflict, the war in Syria seems on one level to be winding down.

HASSAN AMMAR/AP



MIKHAIL KLIMENTYEV, SPUTNIK/AP

Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, and Syrian President Bashar Assad watch troops marching at the Hemeimeem air base in Syria on Dec. 11.

Syrian army's military conquests and, despite the assistance from allies Iran and Russia, Assad is unlikely to achieve lasting control over the entire country. In fact, nearly half of Syria's territory remains outside his control and major bloodshed still lies ahead if he moves to seize those areas, including the sprawling rebel-held Eastern Ghouta region near the capital and the northern province of Idlib, where al-Qaida-linked militants dominate.

Syrian Kurds in the north have also carved up a huge semi-autonomous enclave for themselves, estimated at nearly a quarter of the country. Assad will likely seek to reassert his presence

there at some point. Last week, he called the Kurds "traitors" for working with a foreign country. A Kurdish-dominated group known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by U.S. air power and ground support, cleared large areas from ISIS in northern Syria, including the city of Raqqa which the extremist group had turned into its de facto capital.

Another potential flashpoint is the U.S. presence in Syria. Even though the fight against ISIS has almost concluded, the U.S. has signaled it will keep troops in Syria until an overall peace settlement is reached.

Sovereignty lost

During Russian President Vladimir Putin's brief visit to a Russian air base in Syria where he met Assad earlier this month, a video that surfaced on the internet caught the moment a Russian general grabbed Assad by the arm, holding him back to allow Putin to walk ahead.

It may have been a friendly maneuver, but for many Syria observers, the video was an apt reflection of just how much Assad owed Putin and how much sovereignty Assad has had to give up to stay in power.

Putin's victory lap in Syria also demonstrated his status as the real victor who calls the shots when it comes to Syria.

The Russian leader now monopolizes the military as well as the political track, having successfully diverted the focus away from U.N.-led peace talks in Geneva to Russia-led negotiations in Astana, Kazakhstan, where four so-called de-confliction zones in Syria have been demarcated in the past year, and also the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi, where a troika summit of Russian, Turkish and Iranian leaders was recently held.

While Assad has vowed to regain every inch of the country, he is seen as completely dependent on both Russia and Iran, which has also shored up his rule with thousands of Tehran-sponsored Shiite militias, including Lebanon's Hezbollah, now spread across much of the country.

Pyrrhic victory

Assad may be keeping his seat, but the devastation he presides over is beyond belief or estimation.

His battlefield triumphs have come at so great a cost that it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to reinstate legitimate state authority over recaptured areas, particularly with no resources to rebuild what has been destroyed.

A mammoth reconstruction effort is needed to rebuild cities, including Homs, Aleppo and Raqqa, which have been destroyed, as well as scores of towns and villages that may need to be razed to the ground before they can rise up again. The country's medical and health infrastructure has been decimated and the economy is in shambles.

But as long as Assad is in power, the West is unlikely to fund Syria's reconstruction.

Rula Jebreal, professor of communication at the University of Miami, said Assad has fallen far short of achieving lasting control over the country and predicted the insurgency will continue until Syrians are granted freedom, political participation and social justice.

"Assad has won the strategic war. Yet his victory may be pyrrhic in that nothing about the current situation ensures stability or peace," she added in a recent analysis posted by Carnegie Middle East Center's Diwan blog.

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NATION

Prosecutor: 'No doubt' gunman targeted officers

Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. — There's "no doubt" a gunman who fired at police in several locations in the state capital, wounding one of them before they shot and killed him, was targeting police officers, a prosecutor said.

Ahmed Aminamin El-Mofly fired at a Harrisburg police officer Friday afternoon and later at a state trooper, wounding her before pursuing her, Dauphin County District Attorney Ed Marsico said.

"He fired several shots at a Capitol police officer and at a Pennsylvania state police trooper in marked vehicles," Marsico told reporters, flanked by state police, Capitol police and FBI officials.

The gunfire began shortly after 4 p.m. Friday, when the man fired several shots at a state Capitol officer in downtown Harrisburg, striking his car several times and sending one shot "that went very close to hitting him," Marsico said. About 20 or 30 minutes later, he fired several shots at the state trooper, striking her with one of those shots.

The trooper is "doing well," is in good condition and is expected to make a full recovery, Marsico said.

El-Mofly pursued the trooper to a residential neighborhood, where city and state police encountered him.

"He approached them with two handguns ... firing many shots at those police officers," and the officers returned fire, killing him, Marsico said.

El-Mofly had ties to the Middle East and recently traveled there, but the motive for the attack was unknown, Marsico said.

Marsico asked for information from the public about the man, who also had ties to the city and its western suburbs across the Susquehanna River. He declined to comment on whether the man was known to police.

A relative, Ahmed Soweilam, told PennLive.com that he and his family don't know what to make of the reported actions by El-Mofly, his sister's ex-husband.

"That's not his behavior at all," said Soweilam, co-owner of a Halal store in Camp Hill. "That's not him. I still don't believe it." Soweilam said the family had been estranged from El-Mofly, who had been married to his sister until they separated about six years ago. He said El-Mofly worked as a security guard and then moved back to



MARK PYNES, PENNLIVE.COM/AP

Harrisburg, Pa., police block off sections of the street after a shooting Friday. One police officer was wounded but is recovering.

'He fired several shots at a Capitol police officer and at a Pennsylvania state police trooper in marked vehicles.'

Ed Marsico

Dauphin County, Pa., district attorney

Egypt, his former home, until returning a few months ago. He said El-Mofly had no history of violence or mental illness.

"He's not the perfect guy, but he's not an aggressive person," Soweilam said.

Department of Homeland Security acting press secretary Tyler Q. Houlton said Saturday that El-Mofly was a naturalized U.S. citizen who was admitted to the country from Egypt on a family-based immigrant visa.

"The long chain of migration that led to (El-Mofly's) admission into the United States was initiated years ago by a distant relative," he said in a statement.

Houlton said incidents like the one involving El-Mofly "highlight the Trump

administration's concerns with extended family chain migration." He said chain migration and the diversity visa lottery program have been exploited by extremists.

"Not only are the programs less effective at driving economic growth than merit-based immigration systems used by nearly all other countries, the programs make it

more difficult to keep dangerous people out of the United States and to protect the safety of every American," he said.

Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf said Saturday he had talked to the director of Homeland Security as federal, state and local law enforcement authorities investigate "last night's attack on law enforcement."

Police: Ohio postal worker facing dismissal kills 2 bosses

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — A disgruntled mail carrier facing dismissal has been charged with aggravated murder for fatally shooting his supervisor at a suburban Ohio post office and with murder for killing a postmaster outside her apartment complex.

DeShaune Stewart, 24, of Columbus, was naked during both slayings Saturday morning inside the Dublin post office and at an apartment complex in nearby Columbus, police said.

Stewart is charged with killing Lance Dempsey, 52, at the post office just before 4:30 a.m. Stewart had been scheduled to walk his

mail route on Saturday, Columbus homicide Sgt. David Sicilian said.

Columbus police dispatchers received a 911 call about 7:15 a.m. about a man with a gun chasing a woman outside the apartment complex, about 4 miles from the post office. Patrol officers arrested Stewart and recovered a handgun after he tried to run away.

The body of the postmaster, Ginger Ballard, 53, was found lying between two vehicles. A police affidavit filed with the murder charge in Franklin County Municipal Court said Ballard died instantly of blunt-force trauma to the head after being thrown to the ground. The Columbus Dispatch reported.

Police earlier described Ballard as a postal inspector. The Dispatch has reported that documents found online refer to her as the Dublin postmaster.

Sicilian described the slaying to reporters as "workplace violence" involving a suspect who retaliated against two people involved in his pending dismissal.

President's 11-nation refugee ban partially blocked by district judge

BY KARTIKAY MEHROTRA
Bloomberg News

SAN FRANCISCO — President Donald Trump's 11-nation refugee ban was partially blocked by a judge who found that it violated federal rule-making requirements.

U.S. District Judge James Robart in Seattle, who issued one of the earliest orders halting the

president's January travel ban, said in a ruling Saturday that the Trump administration can continue to deny entry to refugees who don't have ties to relatives or institutions in the U.S.

A worldwide suspension of refugee admissions was included in earlier versions of the president's executive orders that were blocked

by judges until the Supreme Court ruled in June that the restrictions could be enforced for immigrants lacking "bona fide relationships" to the U.S.

The refugee ban — which covers Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, South Sudan and North Korea — is now a separate directive

from the restrictions on travelers. Robart's ruling comes a day after a San Francisco-based appeals court concluded that the restrictions on travelers from six mostly Muslim nations amounts to illegal discrimination.

The Justice Department has argued that the refugee ban is only temporary and applies to nations

that fail to adequately screen people to ensure they pose no security risk to the U.S.

The judge said at a Thursday hearing that he couldn't take it on faith that the government's intention is not to make the policy indefinite "when there just aren't any assurances" that it won't remain in place forever.

NATION

In the heart of Trump Country, his base's faith is unshaken

By CLAIRE GALOFARO
Associated Press

SANDY HOOK, Ky. — For the first time in its 147-year history, Elliott County, Ky., abandoned its Democratic roots to help send Donald Trump to the White House. Almost a year into his presidency, despite dismal approval ratings and few legislative achievements, Trump remains profoundly popular here in these mountains, a region so badly battered by the collapse of the coal industry it became the symbolic heart of Trump's white working-class base.

Here are voices of voters who helped him win into office:

'He has to prove he's real'

Dale Ferguson wanders the aisles of his store, a 9 mm gun loaded with hollow-point bullets tucked into the back of his camouflage cargo pants, just in case. He sells just about everything here: fresh meat, banjos, fishing poles, guns, selfie sticks.

"This is like Walmart," he said, "except way smaller and poorer."

Ferguson's family has owned Ferguson's Market and Hardware in Isonville, Ky. The business hasn't changed much, and neither has Ferguson. He has three priorities in life and in politics, in this order: God, guns, family. Like it used to be, he said, he doesn't know he sees himself reflected in America's pugnacious president.

"I tell it like it is," he said. "I don't have many friends because I'm not politically correct."

He studied Trump's ascent for years, and he eventually picked him to run for the White House. So far, he gives him two thumbs up, mostly for fighting the culture wars. He doesn't mind his Twitter battles with foreign leaders, celebrities and senators, and he doesn't mind everything he's heard over Trump not being "presidential." That's what he liked about him in the first place.

Still, Ferguson doesn't consider himself among Trump's base of supporters who will follow him down whatever path he prescribes. He must make good on his promises, he said, and that list is long: He has to build the wall, bring back coal, finish tax reform, repeal the health care law.

"He has to prove he's real."

'They're really out to crucify him'

Dwight Whitley has never met Rush Limbaugh. But he spends so much time behind the wheel of his truck listening to Limbaugh's radio show that he often feels to him like they're friends.

He doesn't trust much other media. He turns on Fox News in the morning, but sometimes even that seems too liberal. He believes the news media is in cahoots with the Democratic Party, and if that's true, he thinks they're

trying to control society and round up everyone's guns.

"Oh, don't shake your head at me, Flo," he said to his wife.

"I'm just trying real hard to keep my mouth shut," she said. "I'm more fanatical," he confessed.

"He's a bit more radical," she agreed. "But we have similar views."

Whitley was, like most people here, a registered Democrat for 48 years, until President Barack Obama was elected and he got fed up with the party, which he said is for "abortionists and gun-grabbers for gay rights."

When his wife, still a registered Democrat and the editor of the local weekly newspaper, finally heard that Trump was running for president, she laughed; she actually thought it was a joke. But eventually she came around to him.

"Trump is working hard and doing some really good things," Whitley said, sitting in a rocking chair, an antique shotgun above the mantle behind him on a Confederate flag sticking out of the barrel. Whitley said he likes Trump's tough talk, his stance on guns and immigration and religion.

He's seen more coal trucks on the roads, and that gives him hope that the blue-collar economy is improving like Trump promised it would. "Congress is not helping, and the news media, they're really out to crucify him. If it was up to them, he would be in the electric chair."

'There's our man'

Angela Whitley's 5-year-old son salutes the television when he sees Trump. He has his own red "Make America Great Again" cap he likes to wear, and he mimics Trump's signature thumbs-up.

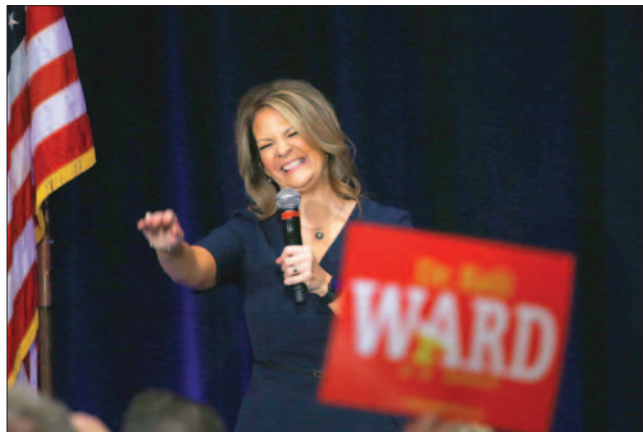
He picked up his love for Trump from his dad, whose death came at a chance to vote for Trump. He'd been a lifelong Democrat — until he and his best friend, Steven Whitt, watched one of the first Republican primary debates of the 2016 election.

Courtney Pennington didn't get a chance to vote for Trump. He'd been a lifelong Democrat — until he and his best friend, Steven Whitt, watched one of the first Republican primary debates of the 2016 election.

"They would one-line him and he would one-line them right back," Courtney said. "There's our man," Whitt remembered.

Angela, also a lifelong Democrat, is a Trump supporter, too. At 32, she has four kids and she works. She doesn't have a lot of time to watch the news and she prefers not to, anyway. She doesn't think a year is enough time for Trump to have made much of a difference, and she's willing to wait for results.

"He's straightforward. He's different," she said. "I don't know. He has that attitude about him. I like it."



ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

Former Republican Arizona state Sen. Kelli Ward smiles as she is greeted by supporters at a campaign fundraiser in October in Scottsdale, Ariz. Some Republican Party leaders warn that conservative candidates with problematic track records will lead the GOP to lose seats in 2018.

GOP fighting for its voters to stop the next Roy Moore

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI
AND SCOTT SONNER
Associated Press

RENO, Nev. — Republicans who hope their Senate disaster in Alabama will scare voters away from other outsider, long-shot conservatives should spend some time with Michele Evans.

More than 2,000 miles from the scene of Republican Roy Moore's stunning defeat, the Nevada Republican doesn't see a connection between Moore and her preferred Senate candidate, Danny Tarkanian, who is trying to unseat incumbent Dean Heller after several failed election attempts.

Evans isn't swayed by the arguments from Republican Party leaders, who warn that conservative candidates with problematic track records like Tarkanian or Arizona state Sen. Kelli Ward can't win general election battles and will lead the GOP to lose seats in 2018.

"We risk losing more with Heller," said Evans, 51, the vice president of Active Republican Women of Las Vegas.

The clash between GOP leaders and voters who, like Evans, feel betrayed by them will come into sharp relief in a series of Republican primaries in early 2018. The outcomes will help determine Democrats' prospects for taking back control of the Senate in a year that was supposed to be a disaster for the party. Democrats have to defend 10 seats in states Trump won, but are increasingly hopeful they can do that and flip two GOP-held seats to win the chamber.

Moore's defeat in ruby-red Alabama has given Democrats some hope of making up ground in typically unfriendly territory. While Moore was an exceptionally bad candidate — he faced allegations of sexual misconduct with teens as young as 14 when he was in his 30s, made repeated homophobic statements and expressed nostalgia for the era of slavery — other GOP primary challengers have baggage of their own.

Ward, who lost a primary challenge to Sen. John McCain in 2016, has appeared on Infowars, a right-wing radio show that traffics in conspiracy theories, and held a hearing about the theory that exhaust trails from jets may be poisoning people, leading opponents to dub her "Chemtrail Kelli." Chris McDaniel narrowly lost a primary challenge to Mississippi's Sen. Thad Cochran in 2014 and also has a history of controversial statements on slavery and immigration.

Like Moore, Ward, McDaniel and Tarkanian have the backing of Steve Bannon, the former Trump White House adviser who's vowed to wage political war against Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell by backing challengers to some incumbents. McConnell's allies have sought to send a message that candidates who align with Bannon will pay the price. They're hoping that sinks in not just with voters, but with donors whom insurgents would need to fund their challenges.

"Steve Bannon is toxic, and we saw that in Alabama," said Chris Pack, a spokesman for Senate Leadership Fund, a super PAC

supporting McConnell's candidates. "Candidates that are drawn into Bannon's universe will now have to answer for Bannon's baggage, like supporting an accused child molester."

Andrew Surabian, a senior adviser to the pro-Trump Great America Alliance super PAC and a Bannon ally, noted that Bannon is supporting long-established elected officials in states like Montana and West Virginia. He also doubted the Alabama loss would move Republican voters.

"The only people it carries weight with are people inside the beltway," Surabian said.

Indeed, there are signs GOP primary voters aren't interested in establishment warnings.

Richard Jones, a retired engineer active in Republican politics in the Las Vegas suburb of Summerlin, prefers Tarkanian to Heller, whom he described as a "RINO" or Republican in Name Only. Referring to Tarkanian's previous losses, Jones said, "If the only rap is he's tried and tried and tried, that's not that negative, from my point of view."

Tarkanian is trying to turn GOP voters' distrust of Washington, and McConnell in particular, into an asset.

"Mitch McConnell's argument is we need to support a guy like Dean Heller, who will do what's politically expedient for himself over what's best for our country because he has a better chance of being elected than I do," Tarkanian said in an interview at Mimi's Cafe in Scottsdale, Ariz. "I think that is why people are sick and tired of politicians."

NATION

Trump attacks FBI deputy director via Twitter

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE

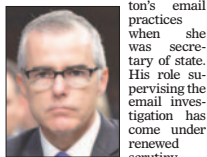
Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — President Donald Trump attacked the impartiality of FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, who is planning to retire from the bureau in the months ahead after being buffeted by attacks over the agency's alleged anti-Trump bias.

In a tweet Saturday, the president wrote: "How can FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, the man in charge, along with leakin' James Comey, of the Phony Hillary Clinton investigation (including her 33,000 illegally deleted emails) be given \$700,000 for wife's campaign by Clinton Puppets during investigation?"

McCabe spent hours behind closed doors on Capitol Hill last

week being grilled by lawmakers on two separate committees as part of a new investigation of the FBI and its 2016 inquiry into Clinton's email practices.



McCabe

when she was secretary of state. His role supervising the email investigation has come under renewed scrutiny. McCabe's wife, Jill, received \$700,000 in donations from Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe's political action committee and the Virginia Democratic Party for a state Senate race in 2015. The

money was donated before McCabe was promoted to deputy director and assumed a supervisory role in the Clinton email investigation. McAuliffe is a longtime supporter of Clinton and her husband, former President Bill Clinton.

McCabe became acting FBI director in May after Trump fired Comey, who was overseeing the bureau's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. Trump maintains there was no collusion between his campaign and the Russian government and has blasted the investigation as a "witch hunt."

From his South Florida home, where he is spending the holidays, Trump also tweeted that McCabe "is racing the clock to retire with full benefits. 90 days to go!!!"

McCabe plans to retire in about

90 days, when he becomes fully eligible for pension benefits. The Washington Post reported Saturday, citing people familiar with the situation. Trump and his Republican allies have made it clear that they want McCabe out of the FBI. But McCabe is a civil service employee who cannot be fired without clear evidence of wrongdoing.

Trump originally tweeted about McCabe's wife's campaign in July, inaccurately describing the campaign donation as coming from Clinton: "Problem is that the acting head of the FBI & the person in charge of the Hillary investigation, Andrew McCabe, got \$700,000 from H for wife!"

In a second tweet that month, the president asked "why didn't A.G. Sessions replace Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe, a

Comey friend who was in charge of Clinton investigation," referring to Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

Republicans claim an anti-Trump bias exists at the FBI, citing the campaign donations to McCabe's wife and, more recently, the release of hundreds of text messages between FBI counterintelligence agent Peter Strzok and FBI lawyer Lisa Page. Strzok and Page used words like "idiot" and "loathsome human" to describe Trump during the campaign.

Strzok was removed from the team of Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is leading the Russia investigation, over the summer after the text messages surfaced.

Democrats accuse the GOP of diversionary tactics and say their criticism could embolden Trump to take steps to fire Mueller.

What the Russia investigation has definitively uncovered so far

By AMBER PHILLIPS

The Washington Post

To review everything we've learned about Russia this year, let's rewind to May. That was a big month for President Donald Trump, who fired his FBI director because he thought "this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story."

His own administration didn't see it that way. A few weeks later,

ANALYSIS

No. 2 at the Justice Department, Rod Rosenstein, appointed a special counsel to ramp up the FBI's existing investigation into "this Russia thing."

Special counsel Robert Mueller's mission: Look into how Russia meddled in the 2016 presidential election, whether it colluded with Trump's campaign, and investigate anything else he sees fit to investigate.

Congress launched its own parallel investigations into Russian interference, and lawmakers haven't ruled out collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign. Meanwhile, journalists have been revealing connections between the campaign and Russia on a sometimes near-daily basis.

So what have all these ongoing Russia investigations found so far?

A lot, but at the same time, no one big thing we can point to that indicates a sure direction of the investigation. "What we can take away is we are in the midst of a major investigation with foreign policy ramifications," said Jeffrey Jacobowitz, a white-collar lawyer who has defended Clinton administration officials.

Here are all the things we know about the Russia investigation to date, ranked in order of their perceived magnitude:

■ Two Trump officials pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about their connections and conversations with Russians.

Trump campaign aide George Papadopoulos pleaded guilty to

lying about his attempts to connect the campaign and Russia; top campaign officials knew he was reaching out to Russia.

And, the biggie: Former national security adviser Michael Flynn admitted he lied to the FBI about the nature of his conversations during the transition with the Russian ambassador to the United States.

Now Flynn is cooperating with the special counsel.

■ Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort and his deputy, Rick Gates, were also indicted in Mueller's investigation.

They pleaded not guilty to charges related to money laundering and making false statements related to their past work advising a pro-Russian political party in Ukraine.

■ The special counsel is looking into the president himself, specifically whether Trump obstructed justice by abruptly firing former FBI Director James Comey.

■ Trump's lawyer said the president knew Flynn had probably given the FBI inaccurate information about his conversations with the Russian ambassador. Trump found this out a few weeks before Comey claims the president asked him to go easy on Flynn.

■ Comey all but accused the president of obstructing justice. He testified under oath to Congress that he believes Trump fired him because of the Russia investigation.

■ Emails revealed Donald Trump Jr., Jared Kushner and Manafort met with a Kremlin-connected lawyer in Trump Tower in New York during the campaign on the premise that she had dirt on Hillary Clinton as "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump." Legal experts said this likely crossed the legal line on collusion.

■ When that meeting became public knowledge in 2017, Trump dictated his son's misleading statement on what it was about, telling him to say it was primarily to discuss policies on Russian adoptions. It's still not clear if the

president knew about the meeting when it happened.

■ Various members of the Trump campaign and administration have repeatedly not been forthcoming about their Russia connections. Two high-profile examples: Kushner didn't include his meetings with Russians on his security clearance form, and Attorney General Jeff Sessions had to retestify to Congress that he did have conversations with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak during the campaign despite indicating under oath he hadn't.

■ During the transition, Kushner suggested establishing secure communication lines between Trump officials and the Kremlin via Russian diplomatic facilities. That's according to the Russian ambassador, who relayed this request to his bosses in Moscow.

■ Mueller has interviewed two dozen current and former Trump aides, including Kushner, former chief of staff Reince Priebus, former press secretary Sean Spicer and current communications director Hope Hicks.

■ Trump Jr. exchanged pri-

vate messages with WikiLeaks during the campaign at the same time the website was publishing hacked emails of Democratic National Committee staffers and Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta.

■ The Russians extensively used Facebook and Twitter to interfere with the election.

Here's one big thing we don't know: whether any of this implicates the president or his campaign. It might. Or it might not. And we may never uncover a smoking gun, legal experts say.

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NATION

Is the Grinch a snake?

Scientists explain the character's rapidly growing heart, special features of other holiday players

By SUSAN SVRLUGA
The Washington Post

It was the first time in his career fixing hearts at Johns Hopkins Medicine in Baltimore that David Kass had been asked to diagnose a condition like this: a heart two sizes too small suddenly grows three sizes in one day.

For the residents of Whoville, yes, the transformation was wondrous. But when asked to be the Grinch's cardiologist, Kass considered what medical conditions might have caused such a change. Never before had he been asked to diagnose a storybook character — but then again, how many storybook characters have cardiac issues?

"Horton has hearing problems," he noted, but you would need an ear, nose and throat specialist for that.

It's Christmastime. And so, researchers at Johns Hopkins, Georgetown University in Washington and other learned places are bringing their expertise to some of the holiday's classic tales.

Georgetown professors answered questions such as: Does Santa use big data to find the perfect gift for every child? Why doesn't Claus age?

And they even wondered — Grinch-like — whether there might be some toy-licensing violations going on in Santa's workshop.

Rudolph

Steve Farber, principal investigator at the Carnegie Institution for Science in Washington and a Johns Hopkins biology professor, took on another question: Why did Rudolph have a very shiny nose?

He knew there are creatures that light up naturally, such as sea anemones and coral that glow a brilliant red. His team routinely inserts fluorescent jellyfish-like proteins into the zebrafish he works with to make the fish glow to study cardiovascular disease. His theory would take a sort of one-in-a-million chance, but it goes something like this:

Say one of the reindeer is pregnant and feeling lousy while Santa's sleigh is soaring over the Holy Land. She passes out, and despite Santa Claus' desperate efforts to maneuver, the sleigh crashes into the Red Sea. The reindeer gets cut on some coral that has a protein in it that, if you ever saw it, you would even say it glows.

"The question is, how would you get that DNA into Rudolph's DNA?" Farber asked, from the pregnant reindeer's blood to the egg cell that will one day be baby Rudolph?

"There are particles related to viruses called mobile genetic elements that have the ability to cut genomes and insert sequences into the DNA."

But why would just the nose light up? If some DNA from the coral got into a protein that's only in the nose — such as a nose receptor — that could explain it.

Still, while it would be easy to inject the DNA into an egg cell in a lab, it's a little hard to imagine that transfer happening in nature.

Harder than imagining a jolly fat man flying a sleigh around the world in one night? For some, yes.



Scrooge

At Johns Hopkins, they called on a theoretical particle physicist to explain the ghosts who bring Scrooge into his past and his future in Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol."

'Avoid eating something where someone would look at it and not be able to figure out how you ate it all. It's probably generally decent advice, whether you're a snake or not.'

David Kass
Johns Hopkins Medicine

Moving forward in time is easy, said physicist Ibrahim Bah, an assistant professor at Hopkins: Just start moving close to the speed of light.

"In principle, physics allows you to go forward in time compared to another person," he said, drawing on Albert Einstein's theory of special relativity. If one person (say, a ghost) is moving fast compared with someone else, his clock will tick slower; 10 years in the ghost's reference frame could be 30 for the person holding still.

"But we don't know how to move back in time," said Bah, whose name is inescapably Scroogian. "You would have to have negative energy density. We don't know how to make that or what that even means." (Indeed.)

If there were a way to tear a hole in the fabric of space — called a naked singularity ring — "if you somehow go through that ring, and come back out, then you would go back in time," he said. "But physically, there is no process that can make a naked singularity ring."

Easier option: Suspend disbelief. Read more Dickens.

The Grinch

When Kass, a cardiologist whose research into heart failure has led to discoveries that have helped many people, was asked if the university's public relations team could videotape him evaluating the Grinch, he said, "I'll do it, but I have to put on a fake Austrian accent and wear my glasses like Chuck Schumer."

He didn't let them slide down his nose, as the Democratic U.S. senator from New York often does, but he was able to come up with a novel explanation. Kass has evaluated many diseased hearts — small and large. If a heart grew as rapidly as the Grinch's, it struck Kass as highly unlikely that the Grinch would be cheerful and active, lifting his sled, handing out presents and whatnot.

Kass drew on research that had interested him, in the journal Science, in which a molecular biologist at the University of Colorado at Boulder studied how a Burmese python's heart grows dramatically after a very

large meal, such as a rabbit.

Then he turned elsewhere in the literature. Just before the rapid expansion of his heart, the Grinch had stolen Who pudding, roast beast and everything down to the very last can of Who hash.

It was obvious: The Grinch must be a snake.

He is very green, but ...

"He does have legs," Kass acknowledged. "But Dr. Seuss put legs and fur on all sorts of things," including plants. "To me, that's not a defining feature."

And in the end, if his diagnosis ("snake") is correct, his medical advice would be easy. "Just don't eat so much at once."

More specifically: "Avoid eating something where someone would look at it and not be able to figure out how you ate it all. It's probably generally decent advice, whether you're a snake or not. It may describe a lot of us after Christmas dinner."



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NATION

Truck-driving simulator gives real-feel practice

By Stephen J. Pytak

The (Pottsville, Pa.) Republican-Herald

MOUNT PLEASANT, Pa. — Tami Yarnall, a commercial driver's license instructor, was behind the wheel of a new teaching tool at Schuylkill Technology Center's campus at Schuylkill County Joe Zerbey Airport.

Made up of a console and three large monitors, the TranSim V56 truck-driving simulator is akin to an arcade game. But it's something student drivers can use to learn basics on how to drive a tractor-trailer and other commercial vehicles.

"They can practice maneuvers before they get in the truck and go out there. The advantage to that is in here, you can't tear up the clutch," David Welch, trainer for L3 Technologies, said. L3 Technologies installed the simulator Nov. 6.

"It will take a lot of wear and tear off the equipment," Yarnall said as she guided the digital vehicle across a parking lot of pixels. "When students can learn to double-clutch using this, it will save a lot of maintenance on the equipment. For forever, students have been out there wearing clutches out. You can't really wear out the clutch on this."

It can introduce students to different types of vehicles.

"This is a truck tractor with a 53-foot-long trailer on the back. You can change loads. It's a 10-speed transmission we have it set at," she said.

Also overseeing the training were Gregory S. Koons, superintendent of STC and executive director of Schuylkill Intermediate Unit 29, and Brittany K. Kellman, the new business manager for STC and IU 29.

Koons was fascinated with how the simulator could test a student's skills by introducing numerous road conditions.

"It even has weather conditions. See, there it's raining," Koons said.

Later, Welch made it snow. The simulator includes a seat, steering wheel and controls that are similar to those in trucks. Three screens show the road, scenery and the rear-view mirrors. There are sound effects and other sensory controls built into the seat to give the student the feel of being on the road.

"If you hit something, you'll feel it. If you miss a gear, it will grind," Yarnall said.

When a student uses the simulator, a teacher can watch the student from a computer at a nearby desk.

"When you're watching a stu-



PHOTOS BY DAVID McKEOWN, THE (POTTSVILLE, PA.) REPUBLICAN-HERALD/AP

Tami Yarnall, CDL instructor, demonstrates Schuylkill Technology Center's new TranSim V56 truck-driving simulator at the Schuylkill Technology Center's airport campus in Mount Pleasant, Pa.



Chris Groody, left, coordinator of post secondary and community based education, uses the TranSim V56 truck simulator with help from Yarnall.



Yarnall and David Welch, senior trainer with L3 Technologies, watch as Groody uses the new TranSim V56 truck-driving simulator at the Schuylkill Technology Center.

dent use this, you can tell when they're riding the clutch and what bad habits they have, like when they're not looking at their mirrors," Yarnall said.

The teacher can also see how the student handles the unexpected.

While she was traveling along the digital road, she came upon a few digital vehicles that were stopped. One of them had hit a digital deer.

"It's not a game," Yarnall said.

"And when they're finished a round, we can hit the replay button to show the entire drive they

just did," Welch said.

Then, Chris Groody, coordinator of postsecondary and community-based education at STC, gave it a try.

He was set up to drive a digital Freightliner truck tractor hitched up to an empty 53-foot flatbed.

"It's another seat students can drive in," Groody said. "Right now I think we have 10 students in the current CDL group, and we only have two trucks. So, I mean, they're sharing seat time. So this will add a third truck, essentially. And it will give them a way to

practice backing, shifting and whatever they need to work on."

The simulator can introduce students to numerous vehicles. Welch estimated there were "more than 50."

They include a 10-wheel dump truck, a municipal garbage truck, a SWAT command vehicle, a Peterbilt car hauler, a concrete truck, a utility bucket truck six-speed automatic and various tractor-trailers.

"Here's one that's got an 18-speed transmission with two trailers. Here's one with 18-speed and three trailers. Here's one with a

flatbed trailer that's empty. Here's one that's full. Here's one that's half full," Welch said as he scrolled the menu.

"We'll start using it immediately, as soon as Tami feels comfortable using it with the students," Groody said.

He said current CDL students have been trying it out.

"But it will be an integral part of the next class, which starts in January," Groody said.

STC received a \$121,500 grant for the simulator from the state Department of Labor & Industry for the Skill Enhancement and Workforce Opportunity Project. STC received the grant with help from the Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board.

"It covers the training simulator, the software, installation costs, training services and a full-service warranty," Koons said previously.

STC started its CDL program in 1993 on the grounds of the Schuylkill County Fire School in the Altamont section of West Mahanoy Township. In 1997, the county moved to Schuylkill County Joe Zerbey Airport, where Schuylkill Technology Center leases space from the county airport authority.

This is the first time the program has had a training simulator like the TranSim V56, Yarnall said.

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Jack Ryan is dealing with an aggressive challenge from the Chinese government. Pavens are being moved around a global chessboard: an attack on an oil platform in Africa, a terrorist strike on an American destroyer and a storm tossed American spy ship that may fall into Chinese hands. But there are hints that there's even more going on behind the scenes.



NATION

Finding
a nicheSpecial-needs
students learn job
skills running shop

By KYRA GURNEY
The Miami Herald

MIAMI — It was lunchtime at John A. Ferguson Senior High School and employees at the Falcon Gift Shop were hustling to keep up with the demand for snacks and birthday balloons.

Danny Vaca-Figueroa, 19, served customers while Anthony Gonzalez, 18, manned the register. At the other end of the cramped store, Gabriel Cartamil, 20, filled helium balloons.

Vaca-Figueroa handed Gonzalez a \$5 bill so he could make change.

"One dollar five times," he said, reminding Gonzalez how much the cash was worth.

Gonzalez opened the register, gave Vaca-Figueroa crisp \$1 bills and marked the sale in pencil on an inventory sheet.

The young men are special-education students who run the gift shop with their classmates, all of whom have autism or intellectual disabilities. Together, the students order merchandise, stock the shelves, serve customers and calculate profits.

Last year, sales topped \$20,000 — not a bad haul for a business whose customers are limited to students and staff at the high school.

"It really is like they're the ones who own the store, and they operate it," said Ivette Amador, a special-education teacher who oversees the shop with the help of three aides. "The ultimate goal is for them to get employed or possibly open up their own business in the future."

And every student has been able to find their niche.

Gonzalez draws advertisements, like the cartoon turkey hanging on the wall to announce the store's new handmade Thanksgiving decorations. He doesn't like to use color, so the poster is in black and white.

Jon Chiacchio, 21, is nonverbal, but he excels at counting merchandise and takes inventory in the afternoons after the shop closes.

Vaca-Figueroa, who has a good rapport with his classmates and the clients, serves as the de facto store manager.

"I love being here," Vaca-Figueroa said. "It keeps me busy, and it keeps me being happy all the time and energetic."

His goal, he said, is to get a "good job" outside the school. Any job.

"I'm a good helper," he said. "I love to help people, help the community."

Employment challenge

For many young adults with special needs, finding a job can prove difficult.

The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities based at the University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University serves more than 11,000 people in South Florida. They estimate that at least 80 percent are jobless or don't work as much as they'd like.

"There's a terrible unemployment-and-



PHOTOS BY JOSE A. IOLESIAS, MIAMI HERALD/AP

Ivette Amador, left, works on a balloon order Nov. 14 with Gabriel Cartamil, a student at John A. Ferguson High School in Miami.



Danny Vaca-Figueroa, left, collects money from a customer Nov. 14 at the Falcon gift shop at John A. Ferguson High School. The shop is run entirely by special-needs students.

underemployment crisis in the disability world," said Michael Alessandri, the center's executive director.

In some cases, young people with special needs don't get the support they need to find jobs that match their abilities, Alessandri said. In other cases, business owners are reluctant to hire someone with autism or an intellectual disability.

Some prospective employers see hiring a special-needs adult as a risk, said Pam Miller, the director of education and employment initiatives at United Community Options of South Florida.

But Miller doesn't see it that way. "To me, it's really not any more of a risk than you would take on with any other employee," she said. "There's uncertainty about any hire that you make."

For the families of special-needs children, the thought of them finding a job can seem overwhelming.

By the time their child gets through high school, parents are exhausted, Alessandri said. They've spent years visiting doctors, trying to navigate the school system and providing around-the-clock care.

"You kind of have to gear up all over again when you finish high school," he said. "That's some heavy emotional lifting."

Special-needs students can remain in the public school system until age 22. But after that, many just end up staying at

home, Amador said.

A growing number of programs, like the gift shop at Ferguson High, aims to change that.

When the Falcon Gift Shop first opened its doors five years ago, the business had a \$1,000 loan from the school, five employees, five varieties of helium balloons and a handful of school supplies.

Now, the store has 15 employees and sells 45 different types of balloons, as well as snacks, perfume, jewelry, stuffed animals and homemade seasonal decorations. Every Monday, Amador takes the students shopping for new merchandise. Often, they'll find items they want to test in the store.

"They tell us, 'Oh, Miss, this is a great item; people are going to like this,'" Amador said.

Learning life skills

The gift shop isn't just about learning business skills.

Amador expects the students to call if they're going to be late rather than asking parents to do it. Nonverbal students are expected to send email.

And particularly for the students with autism, for whom adapting to change can be difficult, running a business teaches resilience, Amador said.

"They learn that you don't always have to have things and you're not always going

to get things the way you want," she said. "There's going to be change. Something might break, or we don't have it anymore."

Even the store earnings provide an opportunity to learn social skills.

Amador can't pay the students, so whatever profits aren't reinvested in the business are used to take the students on field trips or out to eat. "We invite them not only to practice social skills, but also to see that the fruit of their labor is paying off," Amador said.

Similar programs throughout Miami-Dade help special-education students between the ages of 18 and 22 learn job skills and transition to life after high school.

Some schools have stores or bakeries, while other programs are based at job sites including Publix, Nicklaus Children's Hospital and Baptist Health South Florida.

"Employability skills, social skills at the workplace, conflict resolution, all those things that you may encounter at a work site but our students may not know how to respond," said Angie Torres, the instructional supervisor for the school district's autism program. The district serves 35,000 special-needs students, nearly 5,000 of whom have autism.

It's not just public schools. Private schools and nonprofits also offer similar opportunities, like the cafe run by students at United Community Options' Transitional Learning Academy.

And then there are groups like the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, that are trying to create businesses to hire special-needs students after they finish the training programs.

Rising Tide Car Wash is one such local business.

The car wash was opened in Parkland in 2013 by the family of a young man with autism. They wanted to start a business in which their son, Andrew — who likes structure and repetitive tasks — would enjoy working.

Rising Tide recently opened a second location in Margate, and the family has teamed with Alessandri to develop an on-line course for other families frustrated by the lack of opportunities for their special-needs children.

"We're hoping to inspire parents not to sit back and wait for someone to offer their child a job," Alessandri said. "Parents and family members do have the wherewithal to create some meaningful work experience."

WORLD

Amid anger at Trump, Palestinians marking Christmas in Bethlehem

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Palestinians are preparing to celebrate Christmas in the West Bank city of Bethlehem, the historic birthplace of Jesus.

Sunday's festivities are being held against the backdrop of protests over President Donald Trump's declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Vatican officials crossed an Israeli military checkpoint from Jerusalem ahead of midnight Mass at the Church of the Nativity.

Hundreds of locals and foreign visitors gathered in Manger Square as bagpipe-playing Palestinian Scouts paraded past the Christmas tree. Accompanying the decorations this year is a banner protesting Trump's Jerusalem declaration.

Mayor Anton Salman says he hopes this Christmas is especially festive "because we want to show the people that we are people who deserve life, deserve our freedom, deserve our independence, deserve Jerusalem as our capital."



NASSER SHYUQUIM/AP

A Palestinian dressed as Santa Claus argues with an Israeli border policeman during a protest Saturday in Bethlehem.

1 aardvark dead and 4 meerkats are presumed lost in London Zoo fire

By GREGORY KATZ
Associated Press

LONDON — Firefighters and zookeepers rushed to help as a blaze broke out at the London Zoo on Saturday morning, but they were unable to save an aardvark named Mishka and four meerkats.

Officials said Mishka died in the fire and the four missing meerkats were presumed to have perished as well.

Staff members were treated for smoke inhalation and shock after the blaze broke out near a zoo cafe in the early morning hours.

Staffers living on site rushed to move animals as quickly as they could in the frenzied minutes after the fire started, but they were too late to aid Mishka, 9.

Zoo director Dominic Jermy said the staff was "absolutely devastated" by the aardvark's death.

"We had our vet team on site immediately but, sadly, there was nothing that they could do for Mishka," he said.

Workers searched in vain for the four missing meerkats throughout the day, but said Saturday evening they were pre-

sumed to have died in the blaze, which produced intense flames at first and left a smoky pall over much of the grounds.

Vets were called in to monitor the surviving animals, and zookeepers were encouraged that there were no other signs of injury.

The zoo remained closed to the public on what had been expected to be a busy day at the popular facility in Regent's Park. It is set to reopen Sunday.

TV footage from the scene showed the Adventure Cafe and shop to be badly damaged.

The fire started shortly after 6 a.m. It took 72 firefighters just over three hours to extinguish the fire.

London Fire Brigade station manager David George said the cause of the fire hasn't been established.

"Over the next few hours, our specialist fire investigation teams will be searching through the debris and looking and seeing if they can establish a likely cause," he said.



DAISY BARIMBA/AP

People gather Sunday on a bridge that was damaged by the onslaught of flooding caused by Tropical Storm Tembin in Zamboanga Del Sur, southern Philippines.

Typhoon ravages southern Philippines; 120 are dead

Associated Press

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines — One of the deadliest storms to hit the Philippines this year blew out of the country's south Sunday after leaving more than 120 people dead and 160 missing in landslides and flash floods.

Tropical Storm Tembin strengthened into a typhoon before moving into the South China Sea. Most of the dead and missing were reported in the hard-hit provinces of Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur and on the Zamboanga Peninsula.

Intense rainfall in the mountains most likely caused landslides that blocked rainwater, said Marina Marasigan, of the government's disaster-response agency. When the naturally formed dams broke from the pressure, torrents of rainwater smashed into the villages below.

Mayor Bong Edding, of Sibuco town, blamed logging operations in the mountains for a flash flood that swept away houses with more than 30 residents. Five bodies have been recovered so far in the village and search-and-rescue efforts were continuing.

A large number of dead and missing was also reported in Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur provinces, where floodwaters from a mountain washed away several riverside houses.

Marasigan asked the public to heed storm warnings and evacuation orders to avoid casualties.

"We're really sad that we have this news especially because our countrymen were looking to celebrate Christmas," Marasigan told a televised news conference.

Thousands of villagers fled to emergency shelters, and more than 500 passengers remained

1 body is recovered, 36 feared dead in mall fire

Associated Press

DAVAO, Philippines — Philippine firefighters recovered one body from a burning shopping mall Sunday and there was "zero" chances of survival for 36 other trapped people inside the four-story building in southern Davao city, an official said.

Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio said firefighters told distraught relatives of the 36 trapped employees of a business outsourcing company at the top floor of the NCCC Mall that nobody could survive the extreme heat and thick, black smoke.

"They were told that the chances of survival are zero," she said, adding that one of

those trapped may be a Chinese or a South Korean, based on the name.

It is unclear when firefighters would be able to break into most areas of the mall, where the blaze was put under control Sunday morning, although smoke continued to billow from the building. The firefighters won't stop until all those reported missing are found, Duterte-Carpio said.

Investigators will determine the cause of the fire. The prospects of criminal lawsuits against the mall owners and officials would depend on the outcome of the investigation, said the mayor, who is the daughter of President Rodrigo Duterte.

stranded in airports and seaports after the coast guard prohibited ferries from venturing out in the rough seas and several flights were canceled as the storm raged Saturday.

The typhoon was packing maximum sustained winds of 75 mph and gusts of up to 90 mph.

An interisland ferry sank off northeastern Quezon province Thursday after being lashed by fierce winds and big waves, leaving at least five people dead. More than 250 passengers and crewmen were rescued.

Earlier in the week, another tropical storm left more than 50 people dead and 31 others miss-

ing, mostly due to landslides, and damaged more than 10,000 houses in the central Philippines.

Among the areas battered by the latest storm was Marawi, a lakeside city in Lanao del Sur that is still recovering from a five-month siege by pro-Islamic State group extremists that left more than 1,000 people dead and displaced its entire population of about 200,000 people.

It was the latest disaster to hit the Philippines, which is battered by about 20 typhoons and storms each year, making the archipelago the most on the Pacific typhoon belt one of the world's most disaster-prone countries.

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OPINION

UN has new tool in war against ISIS

By NATHAN A. SALES
Special To The Washington Post

The U.N. Security Council has unanimously approved a tough, new resolution to combat the movement of foreign terrorist fighters. This is a major step toward achieving one of President Donald Trump's top priorities — defeating Islamic State and its affiliates around the world.

Thanks to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, we've rolled back the false "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria. Now our challenge is to stop the group from reconstituting itself elsewhere. As our battlefield victories have mounted, ISIS has had to adapt to survive.

Some battle-hardened jihadists are heading home from the war zone or wreaking havoc in other countries. Other attacks are being planned and executed by people inspired by ISIS' violent ideology. The new face of ISIS has shown itself in attacks on soft targets such as hotels, restaurants, stadiums and other large, public venues. We've seen this deadly trend overseas and here at home.

Working with our partners around the globe, and with intervention from Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, we took the lead in crafting a new set of tools to address the evolving terrorist threat. The result is U.N. Security Council Resolution 2396,

co-sponsored by 66 countries. It includes a number of critical measures to address returning fighters, as well as self-directed terrorists inspired by ISIS, al-Qaida and similar groups.

First, the resolution requires all U.N. members to collect and use passenger name record data to stop terrorist travel. PNR data is the information you give an airline when you book a ticket. It's a powerful tool for preventing "broken travel," a tactic of using convoluted travel routes to evade detection. Mehdi Nemmouche, who was charged with killing four people at the Jewish Museum in Brussels in 2014, reportedly used "broken travel" to reach Europe undetected, traveling from Syria by way of Asia.

The U.S. has been using PNR for years, and the European Union has directed its members to adopt their own PNR systems by March. Now, other countries will be asked to live up to the same standard. We stand ready to assist any partner who lacks the resources or expertise to meet this obligation.

Member states will also be required to maintain watch lists of known and suspected terrorists, and to collect and use biometrics — fingerprints, photos and so on. These tools will help authorities spot foreign fighters if they attempt to board planes or cross borders. And because we

all need to interdict threats before they reach our respective shores, the resolution calls for states to share this information in a way that's consistent with human rights obligations.

The resolution further urges U.N. members to tear down the walls that keep authorities from exchanging counterterrorism data with each other, as the U.S. did after 9/11. It also calls on states to provide notice when they deport suspected foreign terrorist fighters.

As we saw in the ISIS role in Sinai's downing of Metrojet Flight 9268 in Egypt in 2015, terrorist groups continue to threaten global civil aviation. The resolution therefore calls for stricter aviation security standards, including measures to address insider threats and cargo security.

Our adversaries are constantly evolving, and the U.S. and our partners must evolve just as quickly. We need to remain constantly vigilant against an al-Qaida on the rebound and an ever-adaptive ISIS. Resolution 2396 will help us do exactly that. It will strengthen international cooperation to address returning foreign fighters. And it will expand the toolkit we use to confront an increasingly decentralized terrorist threat.

Nathan A. Sales is ambassador at large and coordinator for counterterrorism at the State Department.

How to help fix discussions of 'Last Jedi'

By SONNY BUNCH
Special To The Washington Post

A s box office figures piled up and critical raves poured in, there was a curious note of dissent on the issue of "Star Wars: The Last Jedi." While the film clocked a 93 percent fresh rating from critics on Rotten Tomatoes and an 86 on Metacritic, audience scores were sharply negative.

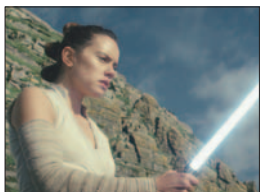
Only 54 percent of audience members gave the film a thumbs up on Rotten Tomatoes. Metacritic's audience score is even uglier. As I write this, its score is a 4.8, with more than 1,600 negative ratings to go with more than 1,400 positive ratings and almost 50 mixed ratings.

I wouldn't say this sort of disjunction is unprecedented, but it is certainly unusual. Typically, critics are harsher on a franchise feature than audiences. Consider, for instance, the LC's 40 percent fresh rating for "Justice League," compared with its 79 percent fresh rating from audiences on Rotten Tomatoes, or Metacritic's 39 for "Pirates of the Caribbean," compared with the 6.2 that audiences gave Johnny Depp's fifth turn as Jack Sparrow. So when we see audience disaffection outpace critical angst, it is noteworthy.

Those who didn't particularly care for the film — including yours truly — highlighted this break as a sign that audiences weren't quite as enamored of the film as critics were. As more reputable polling services weighed in, however, it was clear that something was off. Deadline reported that ComScore audiences weighed in at 89 percent positive, and CinemaScore polling gave the film an A. And, sure enough, the alt-right has claimed credit for dragging the score downward.

What gives? Well, in one way, it's simple: ComScore and CinemaScore poll audiences who have seen the film, while Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic don't.

CinemaScore, as it notes on its website, "provides" unbiased measurement of audience response that helps gauge movie



PROVIDED BY LUCASFILM/AF

Daisy Ridley portrays Rey in "Star Wars: The Last Jedi."

appeal and success by polling movie audiences on opening night for their reaction to the latest major movie releases." Now, CinemaScore isn't a particularly useful gauge of artistic quality — "Last Jedi" defenders pointing to its "A" as a surefire sign of greatness need only remember that each of the prequels received "A-minus" grades — but it is an extremely useful way to gauge how people feel coming out of theaters and whether the expectations of general audiences have been met.

But one thing CinemaScore definitely is? A measure of the reaction from people who have seen the movie in question. And one thing we have to keep in mind when discussing Rotten Tomatoes, Metacritic and IMDb user scores is that they are, well, not. At least, not necessarily. They could be! I would guess that most people who bother to vote on these sites have seen the film in question. But, like any internet poll, they are subject to all manner of shenanigans. Angry fanboys can manipulate the scores by engineering downvote campaigns on social media sites such as Reddit, 4chan and Facebook.

This is a real problem for Rotten Tomatoes et al. If you can't trust that people have even seen the films they are voting on, how are consumers supposed to trust the rec-

ommendations that are, supposedly, coming from their fellow viewers?

Fortunately, it seems to me that there is a relatively simple solution. Consider the case of Rotten Tomatoes, which is owned by Fandango. Rotten Tomatoes offers viewers a chance to buy tickets from Fandango right from the landing page of every new release, and Rotten Tomatoes scores show up on the Fandango site and on the Fandango app. There's a great deal of synergy in play already.

So why not restrict user voting on new releases at Rotten Tomatoes to those who have purchased tickets through Fandango?

You could expand it further. Allow members of the loyalty programs run by AMC and Regal Cinemas and whoever else to vote. Basically, anyone who can verify that they bought a ticket to a show can be given the opportunity. And maybe, after a certain period (say, a month), open it up to everyone else.

Now, look: This wouldn't be a scientific poll, and it would still be open to shenanigans of various stripes. Pressure campaigns could still be cooked up in the depths of the angrier portions of the social web. But we don't consider primary elections illegitimate just because the people who vote in them tend to be more motivated, more energetic and more radical. Indeed, it would give us another interesting data point to consider. If there's a sharp discrepancy between CinemaScore and an RT user score made up of people who can confirm they bought tickets, we'd find that quite intriguing. Intensity of feeling is always something worth measuring.

Regardless, something needs to be done if Rotten Tomatoes and the rest of these sites want to take user ratings seriously. Otherwise, potential customers and cultural commentators alike will have little choice but to disregard customer scores such as the one given to "The Last Jedi."

Sonny Bunch is the executive editor of and film critic for the Washington Free Beacon.

OPINION

Tax reform excuse to raise workers' wages

By CONOR SEN
Bloomberg View

Washington, take note: Corporations' initial reaction to Congress reforming the tax code may have resolved the biggest labor market mystery of the year. How is it possible to have the lowest unemployment rate in 17 years while still having measures of wage growth stuck around 2 to 3 percent?

The answer appears to be that employers were holding on to crisis-era labor market thinking, even in the face of a tight labor market. If tax reform help to change this thinking, 2018 could be a barnburner of a year for workers and wage growth.

For pundits like me who have been expecting faster wage growth in response to a tight labor market for a while, just about all the data have supported our position. Generational lows in the unemployment rate and levels of initial jobless claims. Job opening rates at record highs. Consumer confidence at a 17-year high. Record highs in labor market momentum. Record lows in people mentioning economic issues as a top concern. Employers complaining about labor shortages. Stock prices and corporate earnings at record highs. So what gives?

One dynamic that makes the labor market special is it involves a human dynamic that, say, the energy market doesn't have.

If the price of oil is \$50, then anyone who wants oil has to pay \$50, whether they're the CEO of a Fortune 500 company or a minimum-wage worker filling up the gas tank. Labor isn't like that.

Even though the labor market, like any other market, is subject to price changes based on supply and demand, there's also the reality that the people hiring workers and paying them are usually their superiors in a corporate hierarchy. "You work for me, and you should be grateful for the opportunity" can be a powerful psychological factor in wage negotiations, especially after a prolonged environment where workers have had little bargaining power. Even in a tight labor market, an employer might decide, "We're only going to offer wages at a certain level, and if people aren't willing to work for that wage, so be it."

Staffing firm Robert Half International talked about this in its third-quarter earnings conference call. On Oct. 24, the firm's president said, "There seems to be a bit of a disconnect between what clients are willing to pay and the state of the candidate supply-demand market." Sometimes, it takes time for psychology to catch up to changing market conditions.

We saw this immediately following the presidential election in November 2016. Mere days after the election, economic confidence among self-identified Repub-



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

After Congress passed tax reform, a number of large companies announced pay raises or bonuses for employees.

licans surged. Whether the economic environment had changed was debatable, but there was no arguing that psychology among partisan market participants had.

So one can't help but be cynical when a list of large companies, in the wake of tax reform passing Congress, announced

a combination of pay raises and one-time bonuses for workers on Wednesday. Republicans and supporters of the tax bill will point to the announcements as showing that this particular bill will in fact lead to more job creation and higher pay for workers. Skeptics like myself will point to the preponderance of data suggesting that pay raises were coming anyway and find it more than convenient that employers would point to a specific tax bill as the reason for higher pay — rather than announcing what they were going to have to do anyway in response to the labor market.

But that cynicism has a limit. We've seen in 2017 a continued strong environment of global growth, corporate earnings, equity market performance, job creation and consumer confidence. We know that domestically, the surge in economic confidence among Republicans occurred because of the presidential election. Did President Donald Trump's election "cause" any of that, or did Republicans finally wake up after Election Day to the reality that any neutral observer would have seen if they were tracking the economy with their partisan glasses off? In the same way, perhaps it took the passage of tax reform to finally get employers to accept the labor market environment for what it is today, and not what it was in 2010.

Conor Sen is a Bloomberg View columnist and portfolio manager for New River Investments in Atlanta.

Stung by 'raw politics,' Roe assesses future of VA Choice

By TOM PHILPOTT
Special to Stars and Stripes

Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, expected on Tuesday that every committee member, Democrat and Republican, would vote for the VA Care in the Community Act (HR 4242), his comprehensive plan developed over months to reform the flawed Veterans Choice program.

Roe therefore said he was surprised and disappointed when all nine Democrats at the bill's markup hearing, in the legislation they helped to shape and for which they were original co-sponsors.

In a phone interview, Roe blamed the split vote on "pure, blatant, raw politics based on this tax bill."

The tax bill in dispute is the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act backed solely by Republicans. Democrats and many independent analysts contend it overwhelmingly favors corporations and the wealthy over middle-class taxpayers. The Congressional Budget Office forecasts it will drive up the nation's debt by \$1.5 trillion in a decade.

Roe said the bill would not in principle vote for his Choice reform bill, given uncertain funding support ahead if many more veterans need outside care, and on the same day House Republicans alone approved a mammoth tax relief bill.

During markup of Roe's bill, various arguments were made on the committee. But Democrats and Republicans also traded insults and challenged motives in a committee room where compliments over bipartisanship typically are exchanged.

"I am troubled that we are going to put Choice funding at risk, again, on the very day that some of us in this committee will be voting to drive up deficits and to give a tax break to the wealthiest Americans," said Rep. Ann Kuster, D-N.H.

Rep. Tim Walz, of Minnesota, ranking Democrat on the panel, said the Republican tax relief bill attacks "Obamacare" funding and Medicaid eligibility, so that more veterans from these populations

MILITARY UPDATE

might have to rely on the VA for health care, increasing budget strain on VA-paid community care as reforms take hold.

What particularly upset Democrats, in the shadow of a massive tax relief bill, was an amendment Roe planned to offer at markup that would cap growth of authorized funding for VA-paid community health care at 3 percent annually for four straight years, starting in fiscal 2019.

Roe drafted his cap language after CBO's cost estimate for his Choice reform bill came in at roughly \$39 billion over five years, more than double what Roe expected. It alarmed Republican negotiators the easing of spending caps on other federal departments, including for defense, to avoid a government shutdown.

Roe said he decided moments before mark-up to withdraw his amendment, at the urging of veteran service organizations who opposed it. He didn't reveal his compromise-based primary care preferences, after members had traded harsh words.

The Choice reform bill cleared committee on a straight 14-9 party-line vote. Many of its reforms are also proposed in the Caring for Our Veterans Act (S. 2193), approved by the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Veterans service organizations prefer the Senate bill, in part because it embraces another key goal — to expand eligibility for Post-9/11 caregiver benefits to older generations of veterans and caregivers. Some veterans groups are also nervous that Roe's bill would allow veterans referred to community-based primary care providers to stay with them for a year or even longer. Guardians of the VA health care system worry this would be a step toward privatizing veterans' care.

Roe, an obstetrician who ran a private practice for 31 years, said his intent is not to privatize veterans' health care but, through competition, force improvement

in care quality and management of staff and resources across VA's 168 hospitals.

"I've said from the beginning [that] I most likely would have written more choice into the bill" if possible, he said, given how competition improved outcomes in his own practice. "If I'd been taking care of your wife for 20 years and, all of a sudden, I quit doing a good job, she could vote with her feet. The poor veteran is stuck there. And one of the ways the VA gets better is to compete for patients."

The House and Senate are expected to debate and vote on their Choice reform bills in early 2018. Differences then will be resolved in a House-Senate conference led by Roe and Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., chairman of the Senate committee. In our interview, Roe said he probably will not support including Senate caregiver expansion language in a final Choice reform bill.

His own committee hasn't held a hearing on how the current caregiver plan operates to help severely injured veterans of the Post-9/11 era, Roe said. It "would be irresponsible of me as the chairman to just OK something that's going to cost tens of billions of dollars. ... I'm going to be pretty hard-nosed about that."

But he added, "We're going to need some hearings [to] look at the current program, see what are the good parts, what are the parts not working. And I'm committed to do that. That one of the things we want to do next year."

Roe said his Choice reform bill would create a permanent consolidated VA Care in the Community program, replacing "arbitrary administrative rules" that use driving distance and wait times to determine eligibility for private-sector care. Instead, providers and patients will decide on referrals based on clinical needs.

The VA's current "fee-for-service approach" to community care would be replaced with a managed care model. Every VA-enrolled veteran would be assigned to a primary care provider. VA care overall would gain from modern health care management techniques, telemedicine and cut-

ting-edge practices and technologies.

"We're going to look at best practices, how you get better outcomes with lower money," Roe said. "I can tell you that our practice [in Tennessee] took 25,000 Medicare patients and, in the first year, saved \$6 million in Medicare money because their care was managed. Part of the Choice plan I put together is a managed care plan, and for older, sicker patients it's the most savings you get. I was astonished that you could do that but you absolutely can. And get better outcomes."

Roe didn't disagree with Walz that during future negotiations over VA budgets, Roe's proposal of a 3 percent cap on annual growth in VA community care spending might be adopted. But Roe said he is confident that sustaining the current level of VA spending on community care is likely adequate, given the savings expected from program consolidation and from managed care reforms.

Roe dismissed as "bogus" Walz's argument that proper funding of a reformed Choice program would secure support from veterans if Republicans would just add 0.5 percent to favorable tax rates that still permitted wealthy hedge fund managers under the GOP tax relief bill President Donald Trump signed.

Democrats believe, Roe said, "if government spends money it will somehow choke the economy." Republicans and most small-business owners believe "leaving people more of the money they earned ... lets the economy grow and expand."

Roe said his own experience in private practice after Reagan-era tax cuts support his view that tax relief spurs job creation and economic growth.

Also, Roe suggested, sounding alarms over the funding of VA community-based care is unnecessary. During his own nine years in Congress, he said, "We have never not supplied the money that veterans have needed for health care."

Sent comments to Military Update, P.O. Box 231111, Centerville, Va. 20120; email milupdate@aol.com; Twitter: @Military_Update.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Truck collision spills fish onto interstate

FL ORLANDO — Hundreds of live fish were left flopping on Interstate 4 in Florida when one tractor-trailer rear-ended another, spurring troopers to close part of the highway.

Florida Highway Patrol spokeswoman Kim Montes said several bins filled with fish tanks "sloshed forward" when the flatbed truck carrying them hit the other vehicle early Friday near Orlando. The crash happened as traffic ahead of the trucks slowed.

Montes troopers closed two lanes of the road for several hours to clean up the "slimy situation."

The incident report says truck driver Mayel Perez, 39, was ticked for careless driving.

State police bloodhound found after being lost

CT DANBURY — A Connecticut State Police bloodhound that went missing in a wooded area has been found alive and well.

Police said Friday morning that the dog named Texas had been recovered.

The dog was involved in a search Wednesday evening for a man with autism who had gone missing in Danbury near Wooster Mountain. During the search a handler lost his footing on the steep terrain and dropped the dog's leash.

Another bloodhound located the missing man, who was brought safely out of the woods.

'Thirsty Cowboy' robbery suspect held

AZ MESA — A convicted felon has been arrested in connection with a series of armed robberies in Mesa and Tempe.

Mesa police said Aaron Michael Hess, 58, is facing several counts of armed robbery with a deadly weapon and aggravated assault along with kidnapping.

They said Hess is suspected in three armed robberies in Mesa and one in Tempe between Nov. 27 and Dec. 12.

Police have dubbed them because of the types of places that were robbed and the robbery attire.

Officers served a search warrant for Hess' residence and reported finding a cowboy hat, shirts worn during robberies and a toy revolver that had been altered to look real.

Zoo's female lion, last of triplets, dies at 17

NY SYRACUSE — A female African lion that lived most of her nearly 18 years at an upstate New York zoo has died.

Officials at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo said the lioness named Kierha died Dec. 17. The zoo said the cause of death hasn't been determined, but Kierha recently had been anesthetized for examination and testing "after showing signs of health issues common to

THE CENSUS

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The height in feet of a Christmas stocking that a Missouri city hopes will make the cut for the world's largest. Sedalia's stocking was officially measured last week for entry to Guinness World Records, and it is almost 10 feet longer than the stocking the Italian city of Carrara used to set the record in 2011. It's 72 feet wide and weighs a whopping 820 pounds, and it's so tall that Sedalia doesn't have a building that's high enough to hang it from.



ADAM WESLEY, THE GREEN BAY (WIS.) PRESS-GAZETTE/AP

Workplace conflict

A minivan rests atop other vehicles after an incident in the Lambeau Field parking lot Friday in Green Bay, Wis. Police said a fired food service worker rammed a former coworker's car, bringing numerous personnel from law enforcement agencies to the Green Bay Packers' stadium.

elderly female felines."

Kierha and her two siblings, Mindine and Joshua, were born in April 2000 at the Baton Rouge Zoo and arrived in Syracuse as 8-month-old cubs. Mindine died in 2015 and Joshua passed away the next year.

Official, 4 others held in prostitution sting

MD CRISFIELD — A Maryland city councilman is one of five people arrested in a state police prostitution sting.

News outlets report Maryland State Police said in a release that Paul Erik Emely, 45, a Crisfield city councilman, was arrested Dec. 19.

Troopers assigned to the Salisbury area coordinated the operation in Wicomico County following complaints from local citizens and business owners. State police criminal investigators assisted with the operation.

Each person was charged with solicitation for prostitution.

Landlord accused of pushing tenants for sex

KS WICHITA — The U.S. Department of Justice has filed a lawsuit accusing a Wichita landlord and proper-

ty manager of inappropriately touching female tenants and repeatedly asking them for sex in exchange for rent.

The Wichita Eagle reported the department announced Dec. 18 it filed the lawsuit in federal court in Kansas. The lawsuit alleges two women at Wichita rental properties suffered "egregious sexual harassment and retaliation in violation of the federal Fair Housing Act."

The lawsuit names Thong Cao, Mai Cao, Van T. Le and Tong Nguyen as the defendants. The Justice Department says each defendant owns or owned the properties where the harassment occurred.

The suit also alleges Thong Cao evicted tenants who refused to engage in sexual conduct with him.

Sheriff's office puts 74 on 'nice list' for \$100

GA FORSYTH — A Georgia sheriff's department played Santa for 74 people who are "down on their luck" this holiday season.

The Telegraph of Macon reported that Monroe County sheriff's deputies on patrol were issuing people who appear to be in need of help \$100 bills as part of its third "secret Santa cash

giveaway."

Sgt. Lawson Bittick said the first 20 people to receive the unusual citations offered "smiles and thank-yous."

The \$7,400 giveaway is funded by two donors who thought it would be a positive form of community outreach for law enforcement.

Bus driver accused of drinking, driving kids

NY ALBANY — Officials in upstate New York suspended a bus driver who was accused of drinking while driving students.

WTEN-TV reported a staff member at the Montessori Magnet School in Albany suspected the driver had been drinking Dec. 15 when they smelled alcohol. School officials said the driver ignored the staff member and continued driving.

Officials said a transportation supervisor then directed the bus driver to stop. Authorities said they later determined the driver's blood alcohol content was 0.04 percent.

Bed bug spurs push to eradicate at VA center

KS TOPEKA — A single bed bug is causing

headaches at the Veterans Administration health center in Topeka.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported that staff at Colmery O'Neil VA Health Center on Friday diverted ambulances from the emergency department after the discovery of a single bed bug.

Spokesman Joseph Burks said the bug was found Friday near the nursing station in the emergency department and eradication efforts began immediately.

Man nearly struck by police, then arrested

IL SOMONAUK — A 30-year-old old man who nearly was struck by a police car while walking toward traffic was arrested after officers learned he was wanted for driving on a suspended license.

The (DeKalb) Daily Chronicle reported that police say the Sheridan man was wearing dark clothing and walking in the street about 1:50 a.m. Saturday in Somonausk, southwest of Chicago.

Officers later learned that a warrant had been issued after the man failed to appear for a hearing in a DeKalb County court.

From wire reports

FACES

Royal revelation

Matt Smith says role on 'The Crown' gave him more appreciation for pressure felt by monarchy

By YVONNE VILLARREAL
Los Angeles Times

When Matt Smith heard there was a television series in the works that was devoted to poring over the British royal family, two words came to mind: "Who cares?"

For so long, at least for this English actor, they were just that stuffy family that lived in those opulent "old houses" that he'd visited on school trips as a young boy or whizzed past in his car as an adult.

"We know what happens, we know the story, we've seen the movies," Smith recalls thinking — dusting off his initial eye roll — during a recent trip to Los Angeles. But like a good chap, he read all 10 first-season scripts of "The Crown," crafted by Peter Morgan, best known for writing the historical films and plays "The Queen" and "Frost/Nixon."

"It turns out, well, actually I care about the royal family," he says with a smirk that encapsulates his eventual decision to step into the shoes of young Prince Philip, husband of Queen Elizabeth II, in the Netflix drama.

A tall order, sure — the Duke of Edinburgh is a living historical figure and the patriarch of one of the world's most cherished families. But Smith is used to tall orders and cherished characters. The actor was thrust into the vortex of global fandoms at age 26 when he was cast as the Eleventh Doctor in the long-running "Doctor Who" franchise — he played the role of the alien-time traveler from 2010 through 2014.

"It's been quite nice to play a towering figure in a more naturalistic world," Smith, now 35, says.

Not that Prince Philip isn't a bit of an outsider in his own right.

"The Crown," which is unapologetically female-driven, follows Elizabeth's long and storied reign, with each season covering roughly a decade of the Queen's rule while highlighting the push and pull of her private and public roles. In doing so, viewers also glimpse a man wrestling with living in the shadows of his powerful wife — a depiction that, when viewed through the lens of the current political and cultural climate, gains an added layer of poignancy.

"He's torn between the duty to his wife and a duty to himself," Smith says. "And I found

that conflict very interesting to explore and play because he's pulled in two different directions constantly. No other man in that period would kneel before his wife or walk two feet behind her. That was very difficult for him."

To prepare for the role, Smith says he read all the books he could and watched archival footage of the prince.

"The more I researched him, the more I found there were a lot of misconceptions about him or, rather, preconceptions about him," Smith offers.

Exploring the royal family's private turmoil in "The Crown" has made Smith contemplate the changing nature of fame and the scrutiny that comes with it.

"The type of fame they have, I wouldn't wish it on anyone," he says. "You think Kim Kardashian has a tough life? Try being the queen in the '50s and '60s — 100,000 people would turn up to see her catch a train. They really were, and still are, the most iconic people in the world."

In a follow-up meeting weeks later, just a few days have passed since news of Prince Harry's engagement to American actress Meghan Markle. He's absorbed in thinking about the magnitude of the life Markle is stepping into.

"Her life will never be the same," he says. "She walks anywhere now, people will know where she is. I can't even imagine ... and I played it."

Actor Matt Smith steps into the shoes of young Prince Philip in the first two seasons of "The Crown."

CHRISTINA HOUSE/Los Angeles Times



Mamma Mia! Where's Streep?

The internet was filled with the dulcet tones of ABBA on Dec. 21 after Universal Pictures released the first trailer for "Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again." But where was Sophie's (Amanda Seyfried) mother Donna, played by Meryl Streep?

One consolation prize: The trailer's closing moments feature Sophie's grandmother, played by none other than Cher. "Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again" arrives in theaters July 20. Watch the trailer at tinyurl.com/y7xhnmwbe.

— Los Angeles Times

Petition demands Damon's removal from film

From wire services

"Ocean's 8" could have one less famous face if petitioners have their way.

An online petition to remove Matt Damon from the female-centered "Ocean's 8" after his controversial comments about sexual harassment and assault in the industry has reached more than 18,000 signatures — just shy of its "goal" of 19,000.

"Damon's inclusion would trivialize the serious nature of the charges against sexual abusers like [film producer Harvey] Weinstein — a show massive disrespect for the brave women speaking out," the petition read.

'Royals' showrunner Schwahn fired

"The Royals" showrunner Mark Schwahn has officially been fired amid sexual harassment allegations, Lionsgate announced Dec. 21.

"We have concluded our investigation and Mark will not be returning to 'The Royals.' The fourth

season of the show has already completed production and will air as scheduled on E! in the spring," the studio announced.

Schwahn, 54, has been suspended from the drama since mid-November, when more than 40 women — mainly his female colleagues from "One Tree Hill" — accused him of sexual harassment.

Spears booked for New Year's show

Britney Spears will usher in 2018 on "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve With Ryan Seacrest," the show announced Dec. 21.

Spears will perform "Toxic" and "Work B**ch" from Las Vegas, where she's wrapping her four-year residency on Dec. 31. Other performers include Khalid, Nick Jonas, Sugarland, Kelly Clarkson, Florida Georgia Line, Shawn Mendes, Charlie Puth, Zedd, Halsey, Fitz & the Tantrums, Bebe Rexha, Hailore Steinfeld, Imagine Dragons and Kane Brown.

SHIFTING GEARS

A look at the near future of electric cars

Many more models planned, but there may be few buyers

By KEITH NAUGHTON
Bloomberg

Automakers with ambitious plans to roll out more than 100 new battery-powered models in the next five years appear to be forgetting one little thing: Drivers aren't yet buzzed about the new technology.

Electric cars — which today comprise only 1 percent of auto sales worldwide and even less in the U.S. — will account for just 2.4 percent of U.S. demand and less than 10 percent globally by 2025, according to researcher LMC Automotive. But while consumer appetite slogs along, carmakers are still planning a tidal wave of battery-powered models that may find interested buyers few and far between.

"When you hear people talk about the tipping point, it's really that they're counting the number of product offerings," Hau Thai-Tang, Ford's global head of product development and purchasing, said of electric cars. "Nobody can cite what the actual demand will be."

With battery costs declining rapidly and Tesla's stock price on a tear, automakers are rushing to get in the game with their own all-electric models. General Motors has announced plans to roll out 20 models by 2023, while Ford and Volkswagen are among those planning new electric lineups in China. Toyota promised more than 10 electric models by early next decade.

In total, 127 battery-electric models will be introduced worldwide in the next five years, Thai-Tang said, with LMC predicting pure electric offerings will increase by more than five-fold to 75 models in the U.S. alone.

"There's certainly more hype than real growth in sales volume," Jeff Schuster, senior vice president of forecasting for LMC, said in an interview. "How long have we been talking about EVs? We're now finally seeing them in numbers, but the sales numbers are not taking over the industry by any means."

It's a mix of panic and promise that's driving automakers to set ambitious goals to catch up to perceived market leaders such as Tesla and GM, which each are enjoying a run-up in their stock prices this year. GM Chief Executive Officer Mary Barra said her company will sell more than 1 million electric vehicles per year — profitably — by 2026. Tesla CEO Elon Musk had been planning to buy a million electric cars in 2018, although that timeline could be jeopardized by missed production targets for the \$35,000 Model 3 sedan.

Wall Street continues to reward Tesla and values the Silicon Valley electric-car maker as worth more than Ford, even as the Detroit automaker dwarfs Musk's company in terms of sales, from output to revenue. Tesla shares are up about 60 percent this year, while Ford has gained closer to 5 percent.

"Tesla has a cult following and that helps



LI PO CHING, BAY AREA NEWS GROUP/TNS

Two Tesla EVs charge at the City of Palo Alto EV charging station in a public garage in Palo Alto, Calif.

build the hype," Schuster said. "Other companies say, 'How do we capture some of this buzz Tesla has? Can we do it by electrifying our lineup, too?'"

There's a growing optimism that the electric market is ready for liftoff, based in part on improvements in battery chemistry and costs and in part on the "Field of Dreams" adage: If you build it, they will come. Still, the rush to electrify in the face of uncertain demand has left

"There will be a lot of winners and losers. Companies will die because of this."

Rick Haas
Mahindra & Mahindra

over the next eight years. The company predicts EVs will only grow to between 3 and 6 percent of global auto sales by 2025, said Jim Tobin, chief marketing officer at the Canadian company.

Industry executives convinced drivers will abruptly exit their internal combustion engine vehicles in favor of electric cars may find themselves too overzealous, with LMC forecasting gasoline-powered engines will still make up about 85 percent of U.S. new car sales in 2025. But that shift could accelerate as electrified vehicles reach price parity with gasoline-powered cars, which Bloomberg New Energy Finance predicts will happen by 2029 or sooner for most



MEL MELCON, LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

The 2017 Chevrolet Bolt was GM's most reliable model in Consumer Reports, scoring "above average." General Motors plans to roll out 20 all-electric models by 2023.

models.

Rick Haas, former chief engineer of the Tesla Model S who now runs the North American operations of Indian automaker Mahindra & Mahindra, counts himself in the optimistic camp. Although today's drivers aren't too excited about battery cars, tougher regulations in places such as China and the power-thirsty needs of driverless features could help speed the transition along.

And no automaker wants to be left behind to sell the 21st-century version of the buggy whip: a car that runs on fossil fuel.

"There will be a lot of winners and losers," said Haas. "Companies will die because of this."

Ford does not want to be one of the casualties. Thai-Tang said his engineers and suppliers are working hard on developing a cost-efficient battery that is better and cheaper than today's lithium-ion versions. Toyota is working on energy-dense solid-state batteries, seen as the next frontier in

electric power, with Panasonic.

Yet the greatest challenge may not be technological. It could be marketing, as more than 10 dozen models fight over a sliver of market share.

"The question we've been asking ourselves is, 'OK, if you're going to launch in that clutter of 120 competitive products, what's going to allow somebody to want to even consider your product?'" Thai-Tang said, noting that the "provocative" design for the small electric SUV Ford's planning may help differentiate it in a crowded field. "But not in a weird science-fair kind of provocative" way, he added.

While the math doesn't yet add up for the glut of models chasing the tiny market for EVs, no automaker wants to be caught short when the switch gets flipped to battery power.

"Our ambition for electrification is not modest," Jim Farley, Ford's executive vice president of global markets, said in an interview. "We're going for it."



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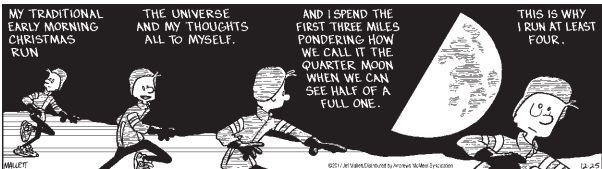
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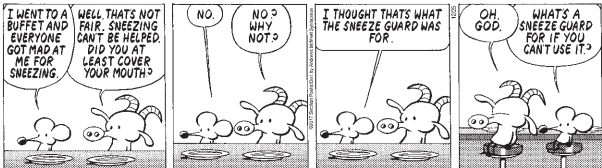
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Pearls Before Swine



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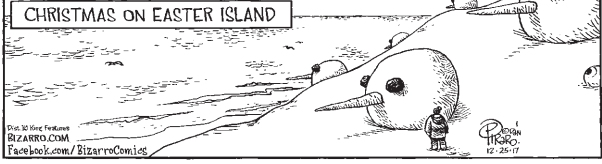
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3			4	5	6		7	8	9	10
11				12		13				14		
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ACROSS

- "It's c-c-cold!"
- Choose
- South Pacific nation
- Leeway
- Vichy water
- Word of regret
- Norway's capital
- Cacophony
- School session
- Like seawater
- Opulent
- "So there!"
- Enjoyed
- some gum
- 28 Words of gratitude
- Emulate Lincoln
- Practice pugilism
- Unpaid TV ad
- Blaze
- Comic Bruce
- Fired up
- Mystery writers' awards
- Work unit
- Despot
- Desert plant
- Bistro handout
- Clothing protector
- Authentic
- Composer
- Stravinsky
- College URL
- ender
- Stately trees

DOWN

- Family biz abbr.
- Activist Parks
- Hot dog holder
- British ref. work
- Two of a kind
- Roman garment
- 1987 George Michael song
- de-France
- Pickle holder
- Doctrine
- Personification of creation
- "Rah!"
- Comedian
- Margaret
- Short trip
- Sit tight
- French 101 verb
- 27 Monopoly card
- 28 Capri, e.g.
- 29 Pundit's piece
- 30 Dress designer
- Vera
- 31 Employ
- 35 Chopping tool
- 38 Decade parts (Abbr.)
- 40 Weep
- 42 Cavalry sword
- 45 Carousel, for one
- 47 Honeycomb compartment
- 48 Showed up
- 49 Too
- 50 "O Sole —"
- 51 Mayo ingredient
- 52 Neither mate
- 54 Fella

Answer to Previous Puzzle

F	A	C	E	S		S	I	L	A	S		
A	L	L	U	R	E		I	T	A	L	I	C
S	E	U	R	A	T		B	U	T	L	E	R
F	E	M		S	H	E	E	P		A	G	E
A	C	N	E		S	S	R		D	Y	E	D
R	E	I	N	S		P	I	C	A	S	S	O
					E	T	S		A	U	K	
V	E	R	M	E	E	R		D	A	T	E	D
I	S	A	Y		C	S	I		R	E	M	I
D	C	I		T		T	U	T	O	R		T
E	A	S	T	E	R		W	A	R	H	O	L
O	P	I	A	T	E		A	C	C	E	S	S
E	N	D	E	D			N	E	A	R	S	

12-25

CRYPTOQUIP

SUFIA, ZEFIC MXXRYQVX

ZXYRXL JWY SUX UWHFLQC

ZXQZWB QBL LFXZXBZXL JYWO

ZOQHH MQYYXHZ: AXV BWV.

Saturday's Cryptoquip: IF A DISTINGUISHED THEORETICAL PHYSICIST WERE IN A PAWNSHOP, WOULD FOLKS SEE STEPHEN HOCKING?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals T

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals H


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SCOREBOARD

Sports
on AFD

Go to the American Forces
network website for the most up-
to-date Web TV schedules.
myafn.net

Deals

Saturday's transactions

BASEBALL
AMERICAN LEAGUE
CLEVELAND INDIANS - Agreed to terms with 1B Yovani Alonso on a two-year contract.

NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION
LOS ANGELES LAKERS - Recalled C Ivica Zubac from Los Angeles (NBAGL).

FOOTBALL
NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE
BUFFALO BILLS - Released DE Marquise Lewis. Signed DT Ricky Hatley to the practice squad.

CHICAGO BEARS - Placed DB Chris Prothro on injured reserve. Signed OL Brandon Greene from the practice squad.

CLEVELAND BROWNS - Signed RB Marquise Williams to the practice squad. Signed WR Larry Pinkard. Signed WR Aaron Smith to the practice squad. Signed LB Don King to the practice squad.

OAKLAND RAIDERS - Placed TE Clive Walford on injured reserve. Signed TE Pharoah Shero.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS - Released LB James Harrison.

ARIZONA REDSKINS - Placed RB Leshun Daniels on injured reserve. Signed RB Kenny Hilliard.

NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE
ARIZONA COYOTES - Signed D Joel Hanley and F Nick Merkley to Tucson from the AHL. Signed D Andrew Campbell from Tucson.

CALGARY FLAMES - Reassigned D Rasmus Andersson to Stockholm from AHL.

DALLAS STARS - Assigned F Cole Clendenen to AHL (CHL).

LOS ANGELES KINGS - Recalled G Jody Wilson from AHL (AHL). Placed F Kyle Clifford on injured reserve, retroactive to Dec. 16.

MINNESOTA WILD - Assigned G Adam Van Dyke from AHL to Rapid City.

OTTAWA SENATORS - Recalled G Mathieu Boudreau from Brampton (ECHL) to Belleville (AHL).

WASHINGTON CAPITALS - Recalled F Hampus Gustafsson from South Carolina (ECHL) to Hershey (AHL).

SAN ANTONIO RAMPAGE - Reassigned D Joe Campanale to AHL (ECHL) and Michael Joyl to Colorado (ECHL). Reassigned F Thomas Frazee to Norfolk.

ST. LOUIS BLUES - Returned D Mathieu Brodeur from loan to Airondrack (ECHL).

TORONTO MARLINES - Assigned D Sam Jardine to Orlando (ECHL).

UTICA COMETS - Returned F Joel Lowry on loan to Manchester (ECHL).

ECHL - Suspend Allen F Bryan Moore two games and Worcester D D'Amico one game.

NORFOLK ADMIRALS - Signed F Christian Horn.

Pro baseball

MLB calendar

Jan. 12 - Salary arbitration figures expected to be subject to final offer.

Jan. 24 - BBWAA Hall of Fame voting announced.

Jan. 30-Feb. 1 - Owners meetings, Beverly Hills, Calif.

Feb. 15 - Voluntary reporting date for pitchers, catchers and injured players.

Feb. 20 - Mandatory reporting date for other players.

March 29 - Opening day. Active rosters reduced to 25 players.

April 29 - Opening day. Minnesota at San Juan, Puerto Rico starts.

June 4 - International amateur signing period closes.

July 6 - Last day to sign for amateur draft.

July 10 - All-Star Game, Washington.

July 21 - Hall of Fame inductions, Cooperstown, N.Y.

July 31 - Last day to trade a player without securing waivers.

Aug. 31 - Last day to be contracted to an organization and be eligible for post-season.

Oct. 23 - Wild-card games.

Dec. 10-13 - Winter meetings, Las Vegas.

College football

Bowl schedule

Saturday, Dec. 16
Celebration Bowl
NC A&T 21, Grambling State 14

New Orleans Bowl
Troy 50, North Texas 14
Cure Bowl
Orlando, Fla.

Georgia State 27, Western Kentucky 17

Las Vegas Bowl
Boise State 33, Oregon 28
New Mexico Bowl
Albuquerque

Marshall 31, Colorado State 28
Camelia Bowl
Montgomery, Ala.

Middle Tennessee 35, Arkansas St. 30
Tuesday, Dec. 19
Boca Raton (Fla.) Bowl
FAU 50, Akron 3

Wednesday, Dec. 20
Prisco (Texas) Bowl
Louisiana Tech 51, South Alabama 10

Thursday, Dec. 21
Gasparilla Bowl
At St. Petersburg, Fla.
Temple 28, FIU 3

Friday, Dec. 22
Bahamas Bowl
at Nassau

Ohio 41, FAMU 6
UAB Old Dutch Potato Bowl
Miami 37, Central Michigan 14

Saturday, Dec. 23
Birmingham (Ala.) Bowl
South Florida 38, Texas Tech 34

Fort Worth, Texas
Army 42, San Diego State 35
Dollar General Bowl
Mobile, Ala.

Appalachian State 34, Toledo 0
Sunday, Dec. 24
Hawaii Bowl
Honolulu

Fresno State 41, Houston (7-4)
Tuesday, Dec. 25
Heart of Dallas Bowl
West Virginia (7-5), Utah (6-6)

Quick Lane Bowl
Detroit
Northern Illinois 34-45, Duke (6-6)

Kansas State 28, Iowa State 16
Phoenix (AFL) Bowl
Wednesday, Dec. 27
Independence Bowl
Fort Worth, Texas

Southern Mississippi (6-4), Florida State 31

Pinstripe Bowl
Bronx, N.Y.
Boston College (7-5), Iowa (7-5)

Foster Farms Bowl
Santa Clara, Calif.
Arizona (7-5), Purdue (6-6)

Houston Bowl
Texas (6-6), Mississippi State (7-5)

Thursday, Dec. 28
Armed Forces Bowl
Annapolis, Md.

Virginia (6-6), Navy (6-6)
World Bowl
Orlando, Fla.

Alabama Bowl
State (9-3), Virginia Tech (9-3)

Alamo Bowl
San Antonio
Stanford (4-9), TCU (10-3)

Malibu Bowl
San Diego
Washington State (9-3), Michigan State (9-3)

Friday, Dec. 29
Bell Bowl
Charlotte, N.C.

Wake Forest (7-5), Virginia Tech (8-5)
Sun Bowl
El Paso, Texas

NC State (8-4), Arizona State (7-5)

Music City Bowl
Nashville, Tenn.
Kentucky (7-5), Northwestern (9-3)

Tucson, Ariz.
New Mexico State (6-9), Utah State (7-5)

AP spotlight

Dec. 25
1956 - Corky Devlin of Fort Wayne goes 0-for-15 from the line in an NBA record.

1963 - The Virginia Tech 37-yard field goal broke 7-40 of the season's overtime games the Miami Dolphins a 27-24 victory over the Kansas City Chiefs in the first round of the AFC playoffs. At 82:40, it's the longest game in NFL history.

1984 - Bernard King of the New York Knicks scored 68 points, including 14 less to the New York Jets.

1995 - Emmitt Smith of the Dallas Cowboys scored his 25th touchdown of the season at 3:17 win over Arizona, breaking the record for touchdowns in a season. Smith passes John Rogers of Washington, who had 24 in 1950.

1999 - Hawaii beats Oregon 23-17 in the longest game in NFL history, an extra point around for the Rainbow Warriors, Hawaii improves from 0-12 in 1998 to 3-4 - the greatest single-season improvement in NCAA history.

2005 - The late Hula Hula became the first woman to play in a Division I football game when she attacked the extra point following a New Mexico touchdown in the Las Vegas Bowl. Hula, a walk-on junior, was killed in a car crash on the way to UCLA.

2008 - The Los Angeles Lakers beat Boston to end the Celtics' franchise-record winning streak at 19 games. Kobe

Cotton Bowl Classic
Arlington, Texas
Southern Cal (11-2), vs. Ohio State (11-2)

Saturday, Dec. 30
Taxslayer Bowl
Jacksonville, Fla.
Louisville (8-4), vs. Mississippi State (6-4)

Liberty Bowl
Memphis, Tenn.
Iowa State (7-5), vs. Memphis (10-2)

Fiesta Bowl
Glendale, Ariz.
Washington (10-2), vs. Penn State (10-2)

Orange Bowl
Miami Gardens, Fla.
Wisconsin (12-1), vs. Miami (10-2)

Monday, Jan. 1
Archie Bryant Bowl
Tampa, Fla.

Michigan (6-4), vs. South Carolina (8-4)

Peach Bowl
Atlanta
UCF (12-0), vs. Auburn (10-3)

Notre Dame Bowl
Orlando, Fla.
Notre Dame (9-3), vs. USC (9-3)

Rose Bowl (CFL Semifinal)
Pasadena, Calif.
Oklahoma (12-1), vs. Georgia (12-1)

Sugar Bowl (CFL Semifinal)
New Orleans, La.
Clemson (12-1), vs. Alabama (11-1)

Monday, Jan. 1
College Football Championship
Rose Bowl winner vs. Sugar Bowl winner

Saturday, Jan. 30
East-West Shrine Classic
East-West Shrine Classic

East-West Shrine Classic
East-West Shrine Classic

NFL Collegiate Bowl
at Carson, Calif.
American vs. National

Saturday, Jan. 31
Senior Bowl
Mobile, Ala.

North vs. South

FCS Playoffs
First Round
Cactus Bowl, Nov. 25

Furman 28, Elon 27
Stony Brook 59, Lehigh 29
New Hampshire 38, Samford 17

South Dakota 38, Nicholls 31
North Carolina 39, Appalachian State 19
Southern Iowa 46, Monmouth (NJ) 7

Second Round
Saturday, Dec. 2
James Madison 20, Stony Brook 7
Kennesaw State 17, Jacksonville State 7

Wofford 28, Furman 10
South Dakota State 37, Northern Iowa 22

West Hampshire 21, Central Arkansas 15
Sam Houston 51, South Dakota 42
North Dakota State 38, San Diego 17
Weber State 30, Southern Utah 13

Quarterfinals
Friday, Dec. 8
James Madison 31, Weber State 10
North Dakota State 42, Wofford 10
South Dakota State 38, New Hampshire 14

Semifinals
Friday, Dec. 15
North Dakota State 55, Sam Houston 31

Saturday, Dec. 16
James Madison 20, South Dakota State 16

Championship
Saturday, Jan. 6
At Toyota Stadium
North Dakota State (13-1) vs. James Madison (14-0)

Bryant scores 27 points and grabs nine rebounds to lead Los Angeles in the 92-83 win. Lakers coach Phil Jackson reached 1,000 victories, Jackson, the sixth coach to reach the first game, had a career record of 1,000-733 with Chicago at the helm.

2008 - New Orleans guard Chris Paul has his NBA-record streak break end at 108 games in the Hornets' 88-68 loss to the Atlanta Hawks.

2012 - The Los Angeles Clippers extend their NBA-record streak to 14 games, 14 games with a 112-100 win over the Denver Nuggets. The Clippers claim the NBA's best record at 22-4 in the finale of a Christmas Day doubleheader at Staples Center.

2013 - The Los Angeles Clippers reach 30 points in the NBA record 105-104 victory over the Sacramento Kings in the season's first win over the New York Knicks 100-84.

2014 - The Los Angeles Clippers win off a pair of interceptions to throw two late touchdowns, including a 4-yard strike to Antonio Brown.

2015 - The Los Angeles Clippers remain to lift the Steelers to a 31-27 victory over the Baltimore Ravens in the AFC.

2016 - The Los Angeles Clippers win off a pair of interceptions to throw two late touchdowns, including a 4-yard strike to Antonio Brown.

2017 - The Los Angeles Clippers win off a pair of interceptions to throw two late touchdowns, including a 4-yard strike to Antonio Brown.

2018 - The Los Angeles Clippers win off a pair of interceptions to throw two late touchdowns, including a 4-yard strike to Antonio Brown.

2019 - The Los Angeles Clippers win off a pair of interceptions to throw two late touchdowns, including a 4-yard strike to Antonio Brown.

2020 - The Los Angeles Clippers win off a pair of interceptions to throw two late touchdowns, including a 4-yard strike to Antonio Brown.

College basketball

Men's AP Top 25 ranked

Saturday
1. Villanova (12-0) did not play. Next: at DePaul, Wednesday.

2. Michigan State (12-1) did not play. Next: vs. Cleveland State, Friday.

3. Arizona State (12-0) did not play. Next: vs. No. 18 Arizona, Saturday.

4. Duke (12-1) did not play. Next: vs. No. 24 Florida State, Saturday.

5. North Carolina (11-2) beat Ohio State 87-72. Next: vs. Wake Forest, Saturday.

6. Michigan (10-1) lost to New Mexico State 64-54. Next: vs. Middle Tennessee, Monday.

7. Kentucky (9-2) lost to UCLA 83-75. Next: vs. Kansas A&M (1-1) did not play. Next: at Alabama, Saturday.

8. Xavier (12-1) did not play. Next: at Marquette, Wednesday.

9. Wichita State (11-1) beat Fordham 86-99. Next: at Oklahoma State, Friday.

10. Wichita State (11-1) did not play. Next: at UConn, Saturday.

11. Gonzaga (10-3) did not play. Next: vs. Pacific, Thursday.

12. Virginia (11-1) did not play. Next: vs. North Carolina, Saturday.

13. Kansas (10-2) did not play. Next: at Texas Tech, Saturday.

14. Kansas (10-2) did not play. Next: vs. No. 15 UCLA, Saturday.

15. Oklahoma (10-3) did not play. Next: vs. Arizona, Saturday.

16. Baylor (10-2) did not play. Next: at No. 10 Texas, Saturday.

17. Cincinnati (11-2) did not play. Next: vs. Memphis, Saturday.

18. Tennessee (9-2) beat Wake Forest 79-60. Next: at Arkansas, Saturday.

19. Texas Tech (12-1) beat Oregon 83-71. Next: vs. No. 18 Baylor, Friday.

20. Seton Hall (10-2) beat Manhattan 74-62. Next: vs. No. 25 Creighton, Thursday.

21. Florida State (11-1) did not play. Next: at No. 4 Duke, Saturday.

22. Creighton (10-2) did not play. Next: vs. No. 23 Seton Hall, Thursday.

Saturday's men's scores
EAST
Boston College 78, Richmond 73, OT
Clemson 80, Mississippi State 67
George Washington 58, Harvard 48
Iowa State 69, Alabama A&M 44
Niagara 89, Cornell 86
North Carolina 81, Wake Forest 62
Seton Hall 74, Manhattan 62
St. Peter's 71, St. Francis Brooklyn 68

OT
West Virginia 86, Fordham 69
Chattanooga 80, Auburn 64
Louisville 74, Grand Canyon 48
Memphis 83, Loyola (Md.) 71
North Carolina 81, Southern Miss 64
New Mexico St. 63, Miami 54

Boxing
At Yokohama, Japan, Naoya Inoue vs. Yoan Boayaux, 12, for Inoue's WBO junior bantamweight title; Shunpei Shimizu vs. Gilberto Peres, 12, for Shit's WBC junior bantamweight title; Satoshi Shimizu vs. Filipino Salvador, 12, for Salvador's WBO super bantamweight title; Marcus Berghel vs. Takuma inoue, for Matsushima, 12, for the vacant WBA super bantamweight title.

Dec. 31
At Tokyo, Milan, Japan, Naoya Inoue vs. Yoan Boayaux, 12, for Inoue's WBO junior bantamweight title; Shunpei Shimizu vs. Gilberto Peres, 12, for Shit's WBC junior bantamweight title; Satoshi Shimizu vs. Filipino Salvador, 12, for Salvador's WBO super bantamweight title; Marcus Berghel vs. Takuma inoue, for Matsushima, 12, for the vacant WBA super bantamweight title.

2018
Jan. 6
At Accra, Ghana, Cesar Juarez vs. Isaac Dogboie, 12, for vacant interim WBO junior featherweight title.

Jan. 12
At Turning Stone Resort & Casino, Verona, N.Y., junior featherweights.

At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., Errol Spence Jr. vs. Lamont Peterson, 12, for Spence's WBO welterweight title; Robert Easter vs. Javier Fortuna, 12, for Easter's WBO light heavyweight title; Marcus Berghel vs. Naoya Inoue, 12, for Inoue's WBO super bantamweight title.

At Riga, Latvia, Aleksandr Usyk vs. Maris Briedis, 12, for Usyk's WBA and WBC super middleweight titles; Roberto Duran vs. Carlos Cuadras, 12, for Duran's WBO super middleweight title; Lucas Matthysse vs. Tewa Kirn, 12, for Kirn's WBO super middleweight title; Jorge Linares vs. Mercurio Gesta, 12, for Linares' WBA lightweight title.

At Winna Vegas, Casino & Resort, Las Vegas, N.V., WBA super middleweight titles; WBO super middleweight titles.

Feb. 3
At Alder, Russia, Marat Gasibayev vs. Yuriy Dotsenko, 12, for Gasibayev's IBF and Dotsenko's WBA super cruiserweight titles; WBO super cruiserweight titles; WBO super cruiserweight titles.

At Bank of America Center, Corpus Christi, Texas, Gilberto Ramirez vs. Habib

At Madison Square Garden, New York, N.Y., Jose Ramon Escobar vs. Amir Khan, 12, for the vacant WBO junior welterweight title.

At Madison Square Garden, New York, N.Y., Jose Ramon Escobar vs. Amir Khan, 12, for the vacant WBO junior welterweight title.

At Madison Square Garden, New York, N.Y., Jose Ramon Escobar vs. Amir Khan, 12, for the vacant WBO junior welterweight title.

At Madison Square Garden, New York, N.Y., Jose Ramon Escobar vs. Amir Khan, 12, for the vacant WBO junior welterweight title.

North Carolina 86, Ohio St. 72
Tennessee 79, Wake Forest 60
UAB 74, MSU 66

MIDWEST
Dayton 79, Cincinnati 62
Ill.-Chicago 84, Trinity (Ill.) Christian College 45

Illinois 70, Missouri 64
Illinois St. 72, Evansville 66
Indiana 65, FAU 65
Purdue 66, Nevada 54
Purdue 66, Nevada 54

Wisconsin 81, Green Bay 60
SOUTHWEST
NC A&T 74
BYU Texas Southern 52
Colorado St. 68, Long Beach St. 66
Idaho St. 67, CS Northridge 55
Miami 75, Hawaii 57
Radford 72, UC Davis 62, OT

Seattle 95, Nicholls 89
Southern Cal 89, Middle Tennessee 84
UC Santa Barbara 82, Sacramento St. 72

UCLA 83, Kentucky 75

Wichita's AP Top 25 ranked
This week

1. UConn (10-1) beat Oklahoma 88-64; beat Duquesne 104-52.

2. North Carolina (11-2) beat Marquette 91-85, OT.

3. Louisville (14-0) beat Air Force 62-50.

4. South Carolina (11-1) beat Temple 87-60.

5. Mississippi State (13-0) beat UNLV 103-80, OT.

6. Baylor (10-1) beat Nicholls State 85-44.

7. Tennessee (12-0) beat No. 18 Stanford 85-79.

8. Texas (9-1) did not play.

9

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division									
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	G	GA	GF	GA	
Tampa Bay	35	26	7	0	54	133	87	97	1
Toronto	37	22	14	4	45	122	104	104	2
Nashville	36	21	15	0	41	101	89	91	3
Montreal	36	16	16	4	36	98	114	114	4
Florida	36	15	17	0	30	92	101	101	5
Detroit	35	13	15	7	33	96	113	113	6
Ottawa	34	11	15	8	30	92	104	104	7
New Jersey	36	20	16	0	40	102	112	112	8

Metropolitan Division

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	G	GA	GF	GA	
Washington	37	22	13	2	46	110	92	92	1
Columbus	36	21	15	0	42	109	97	97	2
N.Y. Islanders	36	19	13	4	42	130	127	127	3
N.Y. Rangers	36	19	13	4	42	117	104	104	4
Pittsburgh	37	18	16	3	39	104	118	118	5
Philadelphia	36	15	13	8	38	99	103	103	6

Western Conference

Central Division									
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	G	GA	GF	GA	
St. Louis	38	23	13	2	48	113	94	94	1
Chicago	37	21	9	4	47	116	99	99	2
Winnipeg	37	20	14	0	46	121	105	105	3
Dallas	37	20	14	3	43	110	106	106	4
Colorado	37	19	13	5	39	103	94	94	5
Minnesota	36	18	15	3	39	102	106	106	6
San Jose	37	18	15	4	37	112	113	113	7

Pacific Division

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	G	GA	GF	GA	
Vegas	38	23	11	4	48	119	100	100	1
Los Angeles	37	22	11	4	48	105	85	85	2
San Jose	34	19	11	4	42	95	84	84	3
Calgary	37	19	13	5	40	101	108	108	4
Edmonton	36	18	15	3	39	101	106	106	5
Vancouver	37	15	17	5	35	98	121	121	6
Anaheim	37	15	17	5	35	98	121	121	7

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild card teams advance to playoffs.

Friday Games

Buffalo 4, Philadelphia 2	Florida 3, Minnesota 2	Arizona 3, Washington 2, OT	Boston 3, Detroit 1	N.Y. Islanders 5, Winnipeg 2	Edmonton 4, Montreal 1	Anaheim 4, Pittsburgh 0	Chicago 4, St. Louis 1	Tampa Bay 3, Minnesota 0	Florida 4, Ottawa 0	Carolina 4, Buffalo 2	Colorado 2, Philadelphia 1, SO	Toronto 3, N.Y. Rangers 2	Colorado 6, Arizona 2	San Jose 4, Nashville 3, SO	Vegas 3, Washington 0	Anaheim 3, Los Angeles 0	St. Louis 3, Vancouver 1
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No games scheduled

Monday's games

Montreal at Carolina	Columbus at Pittsburgh	Detroit at New Jersey	Atlanta at N.Y. Islanders	Ottawa at Boston	Washington at N.Y. Rangers	Nashville at St. Louis	Minnesota at Philadelphia	Edmonton at Winnipeg	Arizona at Colorado	Vegas at Anaheim
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Tuesday's games

Wednesday's games	Atlanta at Carolina	Columbus at Pittsburgh	Detroit at New Jersey	Atlanta at N.Y. Islanders	Ottawa at Boston	Washington at N.Y. Rangers	Nashville at St. Louis	Minnesota at Philadelphia	Edmonton at Winnipeg	Arizona at Colorado	Vegas at Anaheim
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Wednesday's games

Thursday's games	Atlanta at Carolina	Columbus at Pittsburgh	Detroit at New Jersey	Atlanta at N.Y. Islanders	Ottawa at Boston	Washington at N.Y. Rangers	Nashville at St. Louis	Minnesota at Philadelphia	Edmonton at Winnipeg	Arizona at Colorado	Vegas at Anaheim
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Friday Games

Buffalo 4, Philadelphia 2	Florida 3, Minnesota 2	Arizona 3, Washington 2, OT	Boston 3, Detroit 1	N.Y. Islanders 5, Winnipeg 2	Edmonton 4, Montreal 1	Anaheim 4, Pittsburgh 0	Chicago 4, St. Louis 1	Tampa Bay 3, Minnesota 0	Florida 4, Ottawa 0	Carolina 4, Buffalo 2	Colorado 2, Philadelphia 1, SO	Toronto 3, N.Y. Rangers 2	Colorado 6, Arizona 2	San Jose 4, Nashville 3, SO	Vegas 3, Washington 0	Anaheim 3, Los Angeles 0	St. Louis 3, Vancouver 1
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No games scheduled

Monday's games

Montreal at Carolina	Columbus at Pittsburgh	Detroit at New Jersey	Atlanta at N.Y. Islanders	Ottawa at Boston	Washington at N.Y. Rangers	Nashville at St. Louis	Minnesota at Philadelphia	Edmonton at Winnipeg	Arizona at Colorado	Vegas at Anaheim
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Tuesday's games

Wednesday's games	Atlanta at Carolina	Columbus at Pittsburgh	Detroit at New Jersey	Atlanta at N.Y. Islanders	Ottawa at Boston	Washington at N.Y. Rangers	Nashville at St. Louis	Minnesota at Philadelphia	Edmonton at Winnipeg	Arizona at Colorado	Vegas at Anaheim
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Thursday's games

Friday's games	Atlanta at Carolina	Columbus at Pittsburgh	Detroit at New Jersey	Atlanta at N.Y. Islanders	Ottawa at Boston	Washington at N.Y. Rangers	Nashville at St. Louis	Minnesota at Philadelphia	Edmonton at Winnipeg	Arizona at Colorado	Vegas at Anaheim
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Saturday

Avalanche 6, Coyotes 2	Colorado 0 4 2-6	Arizona 0 4 1-2	First Period—1, Colorado 0-1 (10-16), 2-0 (11-16), 3-0 (12-16), 4-0 (13-16), 5-0 (14-16), 6-0 (15-16), 7-0 (16-16), 8-0 (17-16), 9-0 (18-16), 10-0 (19-16), 11-0 (20-16), 12-0 (21-16), 13-0 (22-16), 14-0 (23-16), 15-0 (24-16), 16-0 (25-16), 17-0 (26-16), 18-0 (27-16), 19-0 (28-16), 20-0 (29-16), 21-0 (30-16), 22-0 (31-16), 23-0 (32-16), 24-0 (33-16), 25-0 (34-16), 26-0 (35-16), 27-0 (36-16), 28-0 (37-16), 29-0 (38-16), 30-0 (39-16), 31-0 (40-16), 32-0 (41-16), 33-0 (42-16), 34-0 (43-16), 35-0 (44-16), 36-0 (45-16), 37-0 (46-16), 38-0 (47-16), 39-0 (48-16), 40-0 (49-16), 41-0 (50-16), 42-0 (51-16), 43-0 (52-16), 44-0 (53-16), 45-0 (54-16), 46-0 (55-16), 47-0 (56-16), 48-0 (57-16), 49-0 (58-16), 50-0 (59-16), 51-0 (60-16), 52-0 (61-16), 53-0 (62-16), 54-0 (63-16), 55-0 (64-16), 56-0 (65-16), 57-0 (66-16), 58-0 (67-16), 59-0 (68-16), 60-0 (69-16), 61-0 (70-16), 62-0 (71-16), 63-0 (72-16), 64-0 (73-16), 65-0 (74-16), 66-0 (75-16), 67-0 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COLLEGE FOOTBALL

UCLA upsets No. 7 Kentucky

Holiday, Wilkes lead way for Bruins in front of pro-Wildcats crowd

By BRETT MARTEL
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — UCLA guard Aaron Holiday delivered a steady performance and a clutch finish to a made-for-TV holiday weekend event.

And he did it in the same arena where his brother, Jrue Holiday, plays home games in the NBA — albeit to the disappointment of a decidedly pro-Kentucky crowd.

Holiday capped a 20-point performance with a pivotal driving scoop and two free throws in the final 33 seconds, and UCLA upset No. 7 Kentucky 83-75 on Saturday.

"It's always special when you can play where your brother's played," Holiday said. "Obviously, he's doing really well right now (with the New Orleans Pelicans), so that's good. But just to get the win out here, it's just awesome."

Kris Wilkes also scored 20 points, and Thomas Welsh added 13 points and 11 rebounds for UCLA (9-3), which won for the seventh time in 15 meetings between these historical college basketball powerhouses.

Bruins coach Steve Alford thought the victory was an important step for a squad relying on

freshmen like Wilkes and some returning players who didn't see heavy minutes last season.

"It's good for them to see that, you know what, we can win a game like this," Alford said. "If we keep growing, we could be pretty good."

Hamidou Diallo scored 18 points and Wenyen Gabriel added a season-high 16 points for Kentucky (9-2), which lost for the first time in eight games.

"We're better than this," said Kentucky coach John Calipari, who harped on his players' poor decision-making and inconsistent effort. "Maybe it was Christmas, but (UCLA) didn't have that issue and they flew from across the country. And hats off to them. They played well. They made shots they had to make. They made free throws they had to make."

Kevin Knox had 15 points for Kentucky on an array of perimeter shots and slashing dunks, but Kentucky didn't shoot well overall. The Wildcats went 6-for-21 from three-point range and were outshot overall, 47.5 percent (29-for-61) to 42.6 percent (29-for-68).

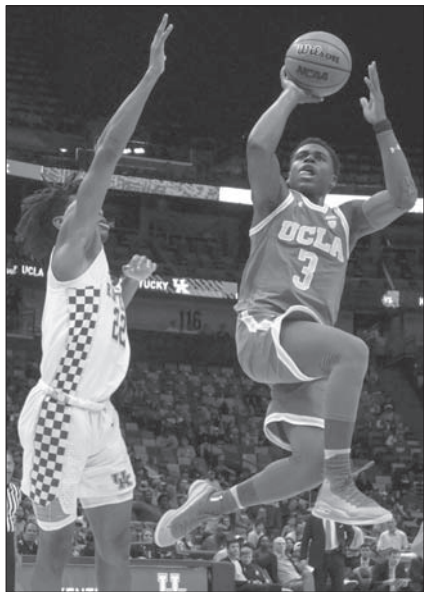
Kentucky hit only two of 10 three-point shots in the first half.

Big picture

UCLA: Hands, who scored 14 points on 5-of-10 shooting, and Prince Ali, who had 12 points on 4-of-7 from the field, gave the Bruins the balanced, efficient scoring they needed to hold off an explosive but inconsistent Kentucky squad.

Kentucky: The Wildcats demonstrated the requisite athleticism and talent to win the game with spectacular highlights on both ends of the court. Ultimately, they were done in by careless passing and a propensity to settle for deep or difficult shots against a team playing well enough to make them pay for their mistakes. Some of their 14 turnovers — including nine in the second half — were caused by UCLA's sound positioning and active hands. But others were passes to spots vacated by teammates who apparently were not on the same page.

"We tried to make the hardest plays when we were in the guts of the game," Calipari said as he began to mock his players' thought processes. "I have a chance for a layup? I'm going to pull up and shoot this. ... I don't get an 'ooh' and an 'ah' when I make an easy play. I like to make this look-away, throw-over-my-shoulder pass."



SCOTT THRELKELD/AP

Bruins guard Aaron Holiday, right, shoots over Kentucky's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander on Saturday in New Orleans. UCLA won 83-75.

Top 25 roundup

UNC bounces back, beats Ohio St.

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Joel Berry II and Theo Pinson each scored 19 points, and No. 5 North Carolina bounced back from a loss to Wofford with a convincing 86-72 victory over Ohio State on Saturday.

Pinson scored six points on flawless free throw shooting inside the final 1:06 of the game as the Tar Heels (11-1) beat the Buckeyes (10-4) at bay in the CBS Sports Classic.

Cameron Johnson scored 13 points in just his second game for North Carolina, which had 13 three-pointers.

Keita Bates-Diop had 26 points — one point shy of his career high — for Ohio State. He shot 10 of 17 for the game and scored 19 points in the second half, including eight straight for Ohio State during a late 13-4 run that briefly pulled the Buckeyes within 78-69 with 1:10 to play.

New Mexico State 63, No. 6 Miami 54: Zach Lofton scored nine of his 15 points in the second half and New Mexico State knocked off Miami in the Diamond Head

Classic semifinals in Honolulu.

The Aggies (11-2) beat a ranked team for the first time in 10 seasons and handed the Hurricanes (10-1) their first loss, leaving Villanova, Arizona State and TCU the lone undefeated Division I teams.

Lofton, a 6-foot-4 senior guard, added nine rebounds and three assists. DJ Vasiljevic led Miami with 15 points.

No. 10 West Virginia 86, Fordham 69: Jevon Carter and Sagaba Konate had double-doubles to lead host West Virginia.

The Mountaineers (11-1) started out a little sluggish in the first half, unable to prevent Fordham runs over the first 7 minutes of the game but they were able to lead by 16 with 4 minutes left in the half.

Carter had 10 points and a career-high 12 assists while Konate had 12 points and 11 rebounds as the Mountaineers won their 11th straight.

Will Tavares led Fordham (5-7) with 18 points and seven rebounds.

No. 21 Tennessee 79, Wake Forest 60: Jordan Bowden scored 17 points and visiting Tennessee shot 59 percent after

halftime.

The Volunteers (9-2) led by one at the half but took control by scoring on seven of 10 possessions coming out of the break. That pushed Tennessee to a 52-43 lead, a margin that never slipped to fewer than five as the Demon Deacons struggled for a sustained push.

Keyshawn Woods scored 18 points for the Demon Deacons (7-5), who had won six straight.

No. 23 Seton Hall 74, Manhattan 62: Angel Delgado scored 15 points and grabbed 18 rebounds, Khadeen Carrington scored 15 and Desi Rodriguez added 13 points, seven rebounds and five assists for host Seton Hall.

The victory was the seventh in eight games for the Pirates (11-2).

Myles Powell had 13 points for Seton Hall before he was ejected in an altercation right before halftime. Michael Nzei had 10 points to give the Pirates five players in double figures.

The Jaspers (5-7) were led by Zane Watterman who had 18 points.



SCOTT THRELKELD/AP

North Carolina forward Theo Pinson dunks over Ohio State forward Keita Bates-Diop, right, in New Orleans on Saturday. North Carolina won 86-72.

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NBA

Santa's bag

Once a kickoff of sorts for the NBA, Christmas is now a celebration of the league's success. Combined viewership on ESPN and TNT is up 21 percent this season, with games averaging 1.9 million viewers, even before what figures to be the biggest numbers of the season.



■ **New York at Philadelphia:** **AFN Sports; 6 p.m. Monday CET, 2 a.m. Tuesday JKT.** A tantalizing twosome that could've been a Big Three. Embiid and Simmons have the Sixers on the rise in their first year together, but imagine if Porzingis was there with them. The Knicks took the 7-foot-3 forward with the No. 4 pick in 2015, immediately after Philadelphia passed for the since-traded Jahlil Okafor.



■ **Cleveland at Golden State:** **AFN Sports; 9 p.m. Monday CET, 5 a.m. Tuesday JKT.** LeBron & KD — Enough said.



■ **Washington at Boston:** **AFN Sports; 11:30 p.m. Monday CET, 7:30 a.m. Tuesday JKT.** Peace on Christmas? Maybe not in Boston, where the Celtics and Wizards renew a heated rivalry that only grew hotter after they went seven games in the Eastern Conference semifinals.



■ **Houston at Oklahoma City:** **AFN Sports; 2 a.m. Tuesday CET, 10 a.m. Tuesday JKT.** Oklahoma City against Houston, a matchup of MVP Russell Westbrook and runner-up James Harden.



■ **Minnesota at Los Angeles:** **AFN Sports; 4:30 a.m. Tuesday CET, 12:30 p.m. Tuesday JKT.** Minnesota visiting the Lakers, two non-playoff teams who have acquired some of the best young talent in the league in recent drafts.

Christmas games a mix of old and new

Finals rematch among schedule featuring top teams, players

Associated Press

NEW YORK — There's LeBron James, Kevin Durant and Golden State against Cleveland, for fans wanting more of the NBA's reigning rivalry.

For those preferring something new, the league's Christmas Day schedule has that, too.

It's a star-studded slate, with the NBA Finals rematch standing out among the top teams and power players.

The league is driven by star power, and the NBA is going all-in this year. The schedule is about the best players, not all the best teams.

And with Joel Embiid, Ben Simmons and Kristaps Porzingis starting the day, and Lonzo Ball, Kyle Kuzma and Karl-Anthony Towns finishing it, this year's showcase is as much about the guys who got next on the marquee as the ones on top already.

"They're doing it for talent. You have the talent and the marketable players, so I understand why they're picking those teams," said Sacramento veteran Vince Carter.

Red wouldn't approve: Red Auerbach would not like this.

As legend goes, Auerbach never wanted his Boston Celtics to play a Christmas home game because team staff and arena workers would lose family time on the holiday. The Celtics often played on Christmas, but never at home. A "home" game on Dec. 25, 1964 against Detroit was played at Madison Square Garden in New York as part of a doubleheader.

Celtics' history changes Monday.

For the first time, they'll be playing at home on Christmas.

It's part of the NBA's holiday quintupleheader. The day's lineup: Philadelphia plays its first Christmas game since 2001 when it visits New York, followed by the NBA Finals rematch with Cleveland at Golden State. Boston hosts Washington in the third game, followed by Houston visiting Oklahoma City, and the nightcap has Minnesota facing the Los Angeles Lakers.

Cleveland's Dwyane Wade will aim to win on Christmas for the 11th time, which would extend his NBA record. Wade and LeBron James each have exactly 301 points and 76 assists on Christmas, the active leaders in both.

Rockets rolling: Tilman Fertitta spent \$2.2 billion to buy the Houston Rockets this fall, a record purchase price for any NBA team.

Worth every penny. The Rockets' numbers are just staggering. They're an NBA-best 25-6 — 15-1 with Chris Paul in the lineup — and on pace to obliterate the league's three-point record for the second straight season.

"It's cool. We just hoop," Paul said, in a late entry for understatement of the year. "We get



ERIC CHRISTIAN SMITH/AP

Houston Rockets guards James Harden, right, and Chris Paul slap hands after a foul during a game against the Milwaukee Bucks earlier this month in Houston. The Rockets are 15-1 with Paul in the lineup this season, and Houston has raced out to a 25-6 overall mark — best in the NBA.

stops, we play in transition. Yeah, we just set screens and we move it, trying to find the open man."

It's working — the Rockets are on pace to make 1,300 three-pointers. The NBA record for that, set by Houston last season, is 1,181.

Soft schedule: New York's easy part of the schedule is winding down.

The Knicks played 19 of their first 30 games at home, going 14-5. Away from home, they're 2-9.

Out of New York's first 11 road "trips," 10 were one-games. Things will get tougher soon — after Christmas, New York plays 16 of its next 20 on the road.

Stat of the week I

■ 8 and 24: In tribute to Kobe

Bryant, who had both of his Lakers' jersey numbers retired Monday.

Stat of the week II

■ It's all about threes now. Before this season, seven NBA teams had averaged 10.8 threes per game. So far this season alone, 15 teams are averaging that many.

LeBron watch

LeBron James is about to turn 33. He's in his 15th season.

And he is ... getting better?

James is averaging 28.2 points, 9.3 assists and 8.3 rebounds on 57 percent shooting, 41 percent from three-point range and 78 percent from the line.

In all six of those areas, he's outperforming his career averages.

The only other players to average 28 points, 9 assists and 8 rebounds in a full season were Oscar Robertson (five times), Russell Westbrook (last season) and James Harden (last season). None of them were in their 30s in those seasons, or shot anywhere near as well as James is this season.



Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James gestures after scoring against the Washington Wizards earlier this month.

NICK WASS/AP

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Flowers lifts USF over Texas Tech

By JOHN ZENOR
Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Quinton Flowers did it again at the Birmingham Bowl, launching another winning touchdown throw with a game against a Power 5 team on the line.

Flowers threw a 26-yard touchdown pass to Tyre McCants with 16 seconds left to give No. 23 South Florida a 38-34 victory over Texas Tech in the Birmingham Bowl on Saturday.

Flowers led the Bulls (10-2) to a second straight dramatic victory in the bowl game at Legion Field, throwing for a pair of touchdowns in the final 4:26 after struggling in the first half.

"I was telling myself, I've got to hit my guys in the chest," Flowers said. "I've got to put the ball in their chest and just give them a chance. I just went out there and my coach called the play that I wanted and thank God Tyre did what he was supposed to do and I did what I was supposed to do and we came out with the victory."

The Bulls, who are 21-4 the past two seasons, won last year's Birmingham Bowl on Flowers' 25-yard touchdown pass in overtime against South Carolina.

The Red Raiders (6-7) had taken the lead back with Nic Shimonek's 25-yard touchdown pass to a wide-open T.J. Vasher in the end zone with 1:31 remaining. That left Flowers with plenty of time to work, it turns out.

He ran 13 and 21 yards for first downs, the latter coming on a third-and-10 play. Then he found McCants on their second scoring connection.

The senior passed for 311 yards and four touchdowns. He also ran 14 times for 106 yards and a fifth score. Marquez Valdes-Scantling



ALBERT CESARE/AP

South Florida quarterback Quinton Flowers threw a pair of touchdowns in the final 4:26 of the Birmingham Bowl to beat Texas Tech 38-34 on Saturday.

gained 133 yards on three catches.

Shimonek took Texas Tech across midfield in the final seconds but his desperation pass on the run was completed well short of the end zone.

Shimonek, who had led a fourth-quarter comeback in the regular-season finale against Texas, completed 32 of 59 passes for 416 yards. This time the Red Raiders couldn't seal the deal.

"That's really exactly what was going through my mind," Shimonek said. "It was almost the same exact play scenario (as Texas)."

He threw for three touchdowns and was in-

tercepted twice on deflected balls.

Keke Coutee had 11 catches for 187 yards and a touchdown while Justin Stockton ran for 103 yards.

The Red Raiders set up two touchdowns in the third quarter off fumble recoveries, taking a 24-17 lead. The defense helped preserve the lead with a pair of fourth down stops, including a goal line stand. Quentin Yontz stuffed Darius Tice from inside the 1 early in the fourth, but Flowers wound up getting the ball back across midfield.

He cashed in this time with a 5-yard touchdown run to tie it with 9:30 left.

"Defensively, it was stop after stop that we had to go get," first-year South Florida coach Charlie Strong said.

"And even for our offense, they had two turnovers and then they had two big fourth-down stops and our offense just continued to play."

The takeaway: Texas Tech: The Red Raiders couldn't translate a 249-130 edge in first-half yards into an advantage on the scoreboard. They converted 10 of 19 third downs.

South Florida: Flowers had a terrific second half after going 4-of-14 passing for 52 yards in the first. He concluded it on a 21-yard touchdown pass to McCants with 51 seconds left to tie it, 10-all. ... Defensive tackle Deadrin Senat had three first-half sacks for South Florida, matching his season total coming into the bowl.

Flowers records: Flowers became the American Athletic Conference's career leader in total offense with a 21-yard touchdown pass late in the first half. He broke the mark of 11,431 yards held by Temple's Phillip Walker. Flowers also set school records for finishing with 34 school or conference marks.



STEVE NUREMBERG, STAR-TELEGRAM/AP

San Diego State running back Rashad Penny, right, runs on his way for a touchdown against Army during the first half of the Armed Forces Bowl on Saturday.

Penny: Army overcomes RB's four TDs

FROM BACK PAGE

"That No. 20, Rashad Penny — if we went into overtime, he's going to get the ball in his hands again," Monken said. "There's no way I wanted to watch that anymore."

Walker took the pitch and raced toward the right corner of the end zone.

"Our O-line did a tremendous job," Walker said. "All I had to do was catch it and run."

The takeaway: San Diego State: The Aztecs went into the game ranked ninth in FBS rush defense, allowing 110.4 yards per game. Army ran for 120 in the first quarter and 440 overall.

Army: The Black Knights went into the game ranked last in the FBS averaging 29.6 passing yards per game. They went 1-for-4 passing for 6 yards, including receiver Kijeli Clin throwing an interception.

Running records fall: Penny finished with a school-record 2,248 rushing yards this season, breaking the mark set last season by Donnell Pumphrey. He said afterward the record doesn't mean anything since the Aztecs finished with a loss. Penny also became the fourth FBS player ever to run for 200 yards in five straight games.

Mission accomplished: Army's seniors progressed from records of 4-8 and 2-10 during their first two seasons to 8-5 and 10-3, with two straight wins over Navy and the school's first Commander In Chief's Trophy since 1996.

"We flipped the script last year and built the foundation that we're still building to where 10-win seasons are now the expectation," linebacker Alex Akerman said.

While the academy's public affairs office started two weeks ago that senior Bradshaw would spend an additional year at West Point, he said following Saturday's play: "This is my last game."

The Black Knights will open at Duke on Sept. 1.

Appalachian State shuts down Toledo

By DAVID BRANDT
Associated Press

MOBILE, Ala. — Appalachian State's improved defense was a huge reason the program closed the regular season on a three-game winning streak and won a share of the Sun Belt Conference title.

The Mountaineers saved the best for last in a Dollar General Bowl blowout.

Appalachian State's swarming, opportunistic defense was the catalyst for an impressive 34-0 victory over Toledo on Saturday night. The Rockets came into the game averaging nearly 40 points per game, but fell behind early and looked completely over-matched. They managed just 146 total yards while turning the ball over four times.

"When we get a little bit of a lead, that's when we're really dangerous," Appalachian State coach Scott Satterfield said. "Once we get that lead and our defense has their bearing straight, the other team starts forcing the ball down the field and that's when we get turnovers."

Appalachian State's defense had improved during the season's final few weeks, giving up just 10 points per game in wins over Georgia State, Georgia Southern and Louisiana-Lafayette. The team's performance against the Rockets was even better. Linebacker An-

thony Flory led the Mountaineers with eight tackles and intercepted a pass in the first quarter that helped shift the momentum.

"The defense has been really solid," Satterfield said. "They've tackled well over the last month and haven't given up the big play."

The Mountaineers' offense had a good night as well, especially on the ground. Jalin Moore, who was the game's Most Valuable Player, ran for 125 yards and a career-high three touchdowns to lead a running game that finished with 327 yards.

"It meant everything sending these guys out with a 'W' like this," Moore said. "I stressed a lot about it. I knew what was at stake. I just tried to play a perfect game for myself and for my boys. It's kind of emotional."

Senior quarterback Taylor Lamb, who was starting his 49th straight game, threw for 131 yards.

Appalachian State (9-4) won its third straight bowl game since making the complete transition to the Football Bowl Subdivision in 2015.

It was the second straight year the two programs had met in the postseason. Appalachian State beat Toledo in a hard-fought 31-28 victory in the Camellia Bowl in 2016 just a few hours up the interstate in Montgomery, Alabama.

The rematch in Mobile turned



DAN ANDERSON/AP

Appalachian State quarterback Taylor Lamb hands the ball to running back Jalin Moore in the first half on Saturday against Toledo in the Dollar General Bowl in Mobile, Ala. Appalachian State won 34-0.

out to be a dud.

Toledo's Logan Woodsdie threw for 124 yards and three interceptions. He had just five interceptions through the season's first 13 games before Saturday.

"I feel like I let my team down a little bit," Woodsdie said. "Give App State a lot of credit, they had me force a couple balls downfield that were uncharacteristic of myself. But overall, you can't take away what we did this season."

The takeaway: Appalachian

State: It was an impressive performance for the Mountaineers, especially on defense. Even during the rare moments when Toledo would have some success on offense, Appalachian State always seemed to force a turnover at a crucial juncture.

Toledo: This was one to forget for the Rockets. The offense looked out of sync all night and Appalachian State's running game methodically picked apart Toledo's defense.

NFL

Ravens beat Colts, edge closer to playoff berth

By DAVID GINSBURG

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — The Baltimore Ravens need one more win to get into the playoffs.

The Indianapolis Colts must play one more game before their painful season finally comes to an end.

Baltimore (9-6) remained on course to end its two-year postseason drought by defeating the Colts 23-16 Saturday. With a win over Cincinnati at home next Sunday, the Ravens will enter the playoffs as an AFC wild card.

"We'll be itching to back out there on Sunday and to get that game under the" quarterback Joe Flacco said. "But we've got to continue to do our business the right way, continue to do what we've been doing, and I think we'll be all right."

What the Ravens have been doing is winning — sometimes impressively and, as was the case Saturday, sometimes ugly.

The Ravens didn't force a turnover, scored only two touchdowns and were dangerously close to going into overtime at home against lowly Indianapolis.

"We didn't play our best game," coach John Harbaugh readily acknowledged.

Despite telling the lowly Colts hang in there right to the end, the Ravens pulled out a much-needed victory.

"Good teams find a way, especially in December," safety Eric Weddle said.

The Colts (3-12), on the other hand, are still looking for that elusive winning formula. After a blocked punt put Indianapolis in position to force overtime, the Colts frittered away their last chance.

"A lot of things haven't gone our way this year," safety Darius Butler said.

Indianapolis close the season on Dec. 31 at home against Houston.

Joe Flacco threw for 237 yards and two touchdowns, Justin Tucker kicked three field goals and the Ravens did just enough

to squeeze out a victory.

"I wish we had gotten into the end zone one more time," Flacco said. "It's not all ways pretty."

Indianapolis closed to 16-13 in the third quarter before Flacco threw a 4-yard touchdown pass to Maxx Williams with 8:40 remaining.

It was 23-16 when Anthony Walker blocked a Ravens punt, giving the Colts the ball at the Baltimore 27 with 2:36 left. Indianapolis moved to the 10 before a third-down sack and a fourth-down incompletion ended the comeback bid.

"We had a great chance to win this game," Colts quarterback Jacoby Brissett said. "We just didn't get it done down there."

Flacco, who went 29-for-38, has thrown for seven TDs with just one interception over his last four games.

"We're a very excited, a very confident football team," Flacco said.



Nick Wass/AP

Ravens receiver Michael Campanaro celebrates his touchdown on Saturday against the Colts in Baltimore.

Scoreboard

American Conference

	W	L	East	Pct	PF	PA
y-New England	11	2	0	.786	395	274
Baltimore	8	6	0	.571	264	306
Miami	6	8	0	.429	252	342
N.Y. Jets	5	8	0	.385	252	342
South						
y-Jacksonville	10	4	0	.714	374	209
Tennessee	8	6	0	.571	296	319
Houston	4	10	0	.286	319	380
Indianapolis	3	12	0	.200	241	391
North						
y-Pittsburgh	11	2	0	.786	344	278
Baltimore	9	6	0	.600	368	272
Cincinnati	5	9	0	.357	233	305
Cleveland	0	14	0	.000	207	362
West						
Kansas City	8	6	0	.571	359	302
L.A. Chargers	6	8	0	.429	311	359
Oakland	6	8	0	.429	281	324
Denver	5	9	0	.357	254	328

National Conference

	W	L	East	Pct	PF	PA
y-Philadelphia	12	0	0	.857	438	279
Dallas	8	6	0	.571	336	311
Washington	6	8	0	.429	305	359
N.Y. Giants	2	12	0	.143	228	355
South						
New Orleans	10	4	0	.714	401	282
Carolina	10	4	0	.714	331	286
Atlanta	9	5	0	.643	318	282
Tampa Bay	4	10	0	.286	285	336
West						
y-Minnesota	11	0	0	.786	343	242
Detroit	8	6	0	.571	358	339
San Francisco	7	0	0	.500	333	243
Chicago	4	10	0	.286	234	294
North						
L.A. Rams	10	4	0	.714	438	272
Seattle	8	6	0	.571	321	294
Arizona	6	8	0	.429	246	337
San Francisco	4	10	0	.286	253	337

x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division

Saturday's games

Baltimore 23, Indianapolis 16

Minnesota 15, Green Bay 0

Sunday's games

Cleveland at Chicago

Green Bay at New Orleans

Denver at Washington

Tampa Bay at Carolina

Min. at Kansas City

L.A. Rams at Tennessee

San Francisco at N.Y. Jets

San Francisco at Cincinnati

Atlanta at New England

Jacksonville at San Francisco

N.Y. Giants at Arizona

Seattle at Dallas

Pittsburgh at Houston

Oakland at Philadelphia

Sunday, Dec. 31

Washington at N.Y. Jets

N.Y. Jets at New England

Houston at Indianapolis

Cleveland at Pittsburgh

Green Bay at Detroit

Dallas at Philadelphia

Buffalo at Miami

Atlanta at Tennessee

Cincinnati at Baltimore

San Francisco at L.A. Rams

Arizona at Seattle

Oakland at L.A. Chargers

San Francisco at L.A. Rams

Arizona at Seattle

Kansas City at Denver

San Francisco at L.A. Rams

Arizona at Seattle

Oakland at L.A. Chargers

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San Francisco at L.A. Rams

SPORTS



One win away
Ravens hold off Colts to move closer to wildcard berth » **Page 31**

Penny pinchers



STEVE NUERNBERG, STAR-TELEGRAM/AP

Army running back Darnell Woolfolk, center, reacts after his touchdown against San Diego State during the Armed Forces Bowl on Saturday in Fort Worth, Texas.

Army spoils Aztecs RB's stellar day with late TD in Armed Forces Bowl

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Army coach Jeff Monken was able to joke afterward. “We had ‘em all the way,” Monken deadpanned.

It wasn't quite that easy for the Black Knights.

Darnell Woolfolk scored on a 1-yard run with 18 seconds left, Kell Walker converted a go-ahead 2-point run and Army added a last-play defensive touchdown for a 42-35 victory over San Diego State on Saturday in the Armed Forces Bowl.

After Rashaad Penny's fourth touchdown run of the game gave San Diego State (10-3) a 35-28 lead with 5:47 to play, Army (10-3) drove 72 yards for the tying score and winning conversion.

“It was tough, but we were confident we'd move the ball,” Army quarterback Ahmad Bradshaw said.

On the Aztecs' final play, they made multiple laterals from their 40. The final lateral was grabbed by Army's Elijah Riley, who returned it 29 yards for a touchdown.

The Black Knights tied a school record for wins set by the 1996 team.

Penny ran for 221 yards, his fifth straight game of at least 200 yards. His scores came on runs of 81, on his first carry, 31, 49 and 4 yards.

Juwan Washington added the Aztecs' other touchdown on a 78-yard kickoff return in the first half's closing seconds.

“Obviously, Rashaad and Juwan had a great night,” Aztecs coach Rocky Long said. “Our defense played really, really poorly. And that's coaching. So, that's my fault.”

Army dominated the time of possession. The Black Knights ran 91 plays to the Az-

tecs' 30 and held the ball for 46:00 to San Diego State's 13:53.

“That's our brand of football,” Monken said. “We don't have anybody like they have — you break through the line, it's six points.”

Woolfolk ran for two touchdowns, and Bradshaw and Andy Davidson ran for one each.

Monken said there was no doubt the Black Knights would go for two points if they pulled within one in the closing minutes with a touchdown.

SEE PINCHERS ON PAGE 30